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Plate I

## A Study of the Sanskrit Texts on the Inter-relationship of the Performing and the Plastic Arts

(With special reference to the *Devangana*-s of Khajuraho)

R. Nath

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The *Natya Shastra* of Bharata<sup>1</sup> is the earliest text on Dramaturgy, Dance, Music etc. and, in fact, a basic treatise on Fine Arts. It is assigned, to the third century A.D. Its fourth chapter contains an interesting *katha* which sheds valuable light on the inter-relationship of two sets of Fine Arts, the Performing and the Plastic. The *katha* states that Brahma took Bharata and his troupe to Kailash to present a dramatic performance before Shiva. Two forms of drama, a *samavakara* entitled 'Amrit-manthana' and a *dima*

called 'Tripuradaha', one of Shiva's own exploits, were staged there before the Lord.<sup>2</sup> After the drama, Shiva praised Brahma and the actors. However, as a measure of improvement, he suggested that the beautiful *karana*-s and *angahara*-s of the *Tandava nrta*, which he himself performed every evening,<sup>3</sup> might be introduced into the *Purvaranga* of their drama so that their *Shuddha-Purvaranga* might become a *Chitra-Purvaranga*:

यश्चायं पूर्वैरङ्गस्तु त्वया शुद्धः प्रयोजितः ॥  
स्मिर्विमिश्रितश्चायं चित्रो नाम भविष्यति ।

(NS, IV. 15-16).

On Bharata's agreeing, Shiva called Tandu to teach him 32 *angahara*-s and 108 *karana*-s of the dance.

Besides being meaningful in several respects, this reference also aspires to define *Chitra*. The *Purvaranga* of a drama i.e. a drama with only dialogue and action, but without the *karana*-s and *angahara*-s (rhythmic movements of limbs, and various postures or compositions thereof) of *Nrta* (Dance), was a *Shuddha* or plain *Purvaranga*; it becomes *Chitra-Purvaranga* when a drama is performed with the *karana*-s and *angahara*-s of the dance. This shows that *karana*-s and *angahara*-s go to make *Chitra*. It is precisely the dance-postures that constitute *Chitra*. In other words, an art which has a *Laya*, *Tala* or *Chhandas* (rhythm) of its own is *Chitra*. This is the classical meaning of the word as ordained by the *NS* over and above the art of painting which it popularly signifies.

The Third Khanda of the *Vishnudharmottara-Purana*<sup>4</sup> (which may be assigned to circa 650 A.D.) delimits its meaning to painting-and-sculpture, i.e. to the Plastic Arts. Thus when King Vajra asked Sage Markandeya why one should study the Fine Arts and why texts (*Shastra*—Theory) should be compiled in order to regularize their practice, the latter replied that one should build temples of gods if one desired happiness in this world and the world beyond, and there in the temple, one should worship images of gods made in accordance with the prescriptions of the *Chitra-Sutra* (more precisely the text on Plastic Arts), e.g.:

इष्टापूर्तेन लम्बन्ते ये लोकास्तान् भूषता ।  
देवानामालयः कार्यो ह्ययमप्यत्र दृश्यते ॥  
अचिह्नत विग्रहेष्वेण पूजयन्ति विधानतः ।  
चित्रसूत्रविधानेन देवतार्च्यं विनिर्मितम् ॥

(VDP, III. 1.4-7).

It was thus that the Fine Arts were brought within the Hindu Temple forum, and gradually they assumed a sacred character. This also suggests that the *Chitra-Sutra* is as much a treatise on Sculpture and Iconography as on Painting. As a matter of fact, *Chitra* has been used in the texts not to denote painting alone, but, in a wider sense, to include Sculpture and Iconography.

The Second Chapter of the Third Khanda of the *VDP* further elaborates on this subject and vividly explains the inter-relationship of the Fine Arts. When Vajra asks Markandeya how to make the images of gods, the latter replies that he who does not know *Chitra-Sutra* cannot understand Sculpture and Iconography:

चित्रसूत्रं न जानाति यस्तु सम्यक् नराधिप ।  
प्रतिमालक्षणं वेत्ति न शक्यं तेन कश्चित् ॥

(VDP, III. 2.2).

*Chitra-Sutra* cannot be understood without *Nrta-Shastra* (Theory of Dance) as in both these Fine Arts worldly phenomena are imitated:

विना तु नृत्तशास्त्रेण चित्रसूत्रं सुदुर्विदम् ।  
जगतेऽनुक्रिया कार्या द्वयोरपि यतो नृप ॥

(VDP, III.2.4).

Markandeya adds that it is necessary to know Instrumental Music in order to understand *Nrta*, and to know *Gita* (Theory of Musical Composition) to understand Instrumental Music. One who knows *Gita-Shastra* knows all the Fine Arts.

A clue to an understanding of the *VDP* reference, *jagato-anukriya*, and the subject-matter of worldly phenomena which are stated to be imitated, is provided by the *Aparajitaprchhha* of Bhuvanadevacharya<sup>5</sup> of the late twelfth century A.D. In *Sutra*-224, Aparajita asks Vishvakarma about the subject-matter of *Chitra*, how it originated, how many types of *Chitra* existed and other questions relating to *Chitra*. The latter explains to him that *Chitra* is the source and the cause of the whole of creation; it is the origin of all the three *Loka*-s, subtle and gross worlds, the gods including the Trinity, the planets including the Sun and the Earth, vegetation, all species of living beings etc., etc. The whole of creation is, in fact, a *Chitra* and the *Brahmajnani* perceives this world in the form of *Chitra* as one ordinarily looks at the moon reflected in the water; *Chitra* is an image of *Brahman* itself:

पश्यन्ति भावरूपैश्च जले चन्द्रमसं यथा  
तद्वच्चित्रमयं सर्वं पश्यन्ति ब्रह्मवादिनः ।

विश्वं विश्वावतारश्च त्वनाद्यन्तरश्च सम्भवत् ।  
आदि चित्रमयं सर्वं पश्यन्ति ब्रह्मचक्षुषा ॥

(AP, 224.11-12).

This phenomenal world is *Chitra*; in fact, the latter is the living force of the former. Water and well are so interconnected as to be two aspects of the same entity; similarly related are *Chitra* and the world and we cannot contemplate the one without the other:

देवीदेवी शिवः शक्तिः व्याप्तं मतश्चराचरम् ।  
चित्ररूपमिदं ज्ञेयं जीवमद्ये च जीवकम् ॥  
कूपी जले जलं कूपे निदिपय्यति तस्तथा ।  
तद्विचित्रमयं विश्वं चित्रं विश्वे तथैव च ॥

(AP, 224.23-24).

Apart from expressing the monistic concept of creation, this *Sutra* laid down that the rhythm (or *Chhandas*) of creation forms the subject-matter of *Chitra*. It is this rhythm, imitated from the phenomenal world, that constitutes the subject-matter of the Fine Arts. To be precise, it is the incarnation of the subtle aspect of the gross world. That is what the *VDP* reference denotes by *jagato-anukriya*.

The *VDP* emphasized the inter-relation, or rather the inter-dependence of the two arts: *Nrta* and *Chitra*. Dance, the Performing Art, is meant by *Nrta*. By *Chitra* both the Plastic Arts (the two-dimensional art of Painting and the three-dimensional art of Sculpture) are denoted. Thus it is stated categorically:

यथा नृत्ते तथा चित्रे त्रैलोक्यानुकृतिः स्मृता ।

(VDP, III.35.5).

Whatever is prescribed for *Nrta* is equally applicable to *Chitra* as both imitate (the rhythm or *Chhandas* or the subtle aspect of) the phenomenal world. Movements of eyes, lips and limbs, depiction of *Bhava* and *Rasa* (sentiments) and the various *Mudra*-s (postures), prescribed for Dance are also followed in *Chitra* and the same principles govern the practice of these two sets of Fine Arts, one Performing and the other Plastic:

दृष्टयस्तु तथा भावा अङ्गोपाङ्गानि स्ववशः ।  
कराश्च ये मता नृत्ते पूर्वोक्ता नृपसत्तम ॥

(VDP, III. 35.6).

Further:

रसभावाश्च कर्तव्या यथा पूर्वमुदाहृताः ।  
यथायोगं तु युञ्जीत नृत्ताभिहितमत्र च ॥

(VDP, III.42.81).

In fact, the Sage declared *Nrta* to be *Chitra*, par excellence:

नृत्तं चित्रं परं मतम् ।

(VDP, III.35.7).

The main practical difference between the two is that while the former has *Tala* or *Laya* because it is related to *Kala* (Time), the latter has *Rupa* and *Mana-Pramana* because it is related to *Dik* (Space).

King Bhoja (1018-54 A.D.) confirmed the inter-relationship of *Natya* and *Chitra* in the chapter *Rasadrshatilakshana* of his most celebrated *Shilpa* text, the *Samarangana-Sutradhara*<sup>6</sup>:

हस्तेन सूचयन्नर्थं दृष्ट्या च प्रतिपादयन् ।  
सजीवं शीतं दृश्येत सर्वाभिनयदर्शनात् ॥  
आङ्गिके चैव चित्रे + + + साधनमुच्यते ।  
( भवेदत्रादत् ? ) स्तस्मादनयोश्चित्रमाङ्गितम् ॥

(SS. LXXXII.33-34).

Iconography laid down rules for the making of images (meant for consecration and worship) and sculptures (meant for occupying various positions in the sectarian hierarchy on the temple walls) of gods and goddesses and, to ensure this, it prescribed figures and postures along with *ayudha*-s (weapons) and *abhushana*-s (ornaments). The iconographic injunctions applied only to the images and sculptures of gods and goddesses. The *Devangana-Mithuna* sculptures (female figures in various sportive postures and amorous or erotic couples) which were used exclusively for ornamentation along the temple walls, were non-sectarian and, in fact, non-religious and they were originally carved without the guidance, control or restraint of the iconographic dicta, much at the discretion of the artist. These sculptures constituted one of the chief ornaments of the Hindu Temple<sup>8</sup> and, as such, their import was essentially aesthetic; it is primarily this consideration which guided their making and stationing on the temple walls.

Except for vague suggestions, here or there, the texts did not lay down rules for them. Thus the *VDP* while discussing the nine *Sthanā*-s (postures-in-perspective) of the subjects of Painting and Sculpture made a passing reference to them.



लीलाविलासविभ्रान्तं

विशालजघनस्थलम् ।

स्थिरकपादविनयासं

स्त्रीरूपं विलिखेद्बुधः ॥

(VDP, III.39.50).

The master-artist should always depict female-figures (*Devangana*-s) in sportive (*Lila*) and erotic (*Vilasa*) postures in which one leg rests gracefully and her mons veneris is prominently shown. It is more a prescription for perspective rather than for posture.

It is around the beginning of the fifteenth century A.D., that a West Indian *Shilpa* text, the *Kshirarnava*<sup>9</sup>, discussed the subject in detail and laid down a few general rules for the making of non-sectarian *Devangana* sculptures. For example, the text, in Chapter CXX, laid down that on the *jamgha* of the *mandovara* of the *Chaturmukha-Mahaprasada*, divinities and gay sculptures of *Devangana*-s should be depicted in *Lasya* and *Tandava* dance postures:

लीकपालाश्च दिग्पालाः

अतीवानन्दपूरिताः ॥

रघदेवादीनां

तत्र

नृत्यं वादित्रं

संयुताः ।

लास्यस्तण्डवश्चैव

तालानां

च विशेषतः ॥

(KSV, CXX.82-83).

The fifty and odd *shloka*-s which follow demarcate different parts of the *mandovara* where dancing figures, *Devangana*-s and divinities were prescribed for depiction. More important in this connection is its prescription and treatment of thirty-two types of *Devangana*-s, all in various graceful dancing postures:

मीनका खड्गखेटं च नृत्याति च पदस्तले ।

अगलस्या च लीलावती बिधिचिता सदपरिणा ॥

सुन्दरी नृत्ययुक्ता च शुभा कंटकनिर्गता ।

पादभृङ्गारकर्त्री च हंसा कमललोचना ॥

— — — — —

नृत्याति च सर्वकला वरदादक्षपारिणी ॥

मस्तके बामहस्ते च चिंतनमुद्रा संयुता ।

मग्नभावे कृतस्नाना नाम्ना कपूरमञ्जरी ॥

(KSV, CXX. 113-116).

Menaka with sword and shield in her hands is shown dancing. Lilavati in a state of *alasya* (indolence) and Vidhichita looking into a mirror are also shown in dancing postures and Sundari in proper dance-form. Shubhagamini removing the thorn from her foot and lotus-eyed Hamsavali tying *ghan-jhara* or *ghunghuru* on her ankle are also shown in dance postures. A dancing Sarvakala is shown in a pensive mood with her right hand in *varad-mudra* and her left hand placed on her forehead. Karpuramanjari, too, is depicted in a dance posture, apparently lost in the presiding sentiment.

It is noteworthy that though some *Devangana*-s are shown engaged in various playful acts, which are essentially part of *shringara*, each one of them stands primarily in a dance-posture: the eyes, the limbs, and mainly the feet are so poised as to suggest that she is composed in a *karana*. She does not stand in a normal stance but in a specific dance-posture, howsoever simple it might appear to be.

Dance-postures have been specifically mentioned along with Chitrini (*Nrtyabhava cha chitrini*); Gandhari (*Gandhari nama-nartiki*); Devashakha (*Golchakram nrtyakartri Devashakha*); Chandravali (*Anjalibaddha nartaki cha Chandravali sulochana*); Sugandha (*Sugandha cha chakradhara chakram nrtyam cha kurvati*); Manavi (*Harahasta cha nrtyangi Manavi*); Manahamsa (*Prushthavamshodbhava nrtya Manahamsa cha sundari*); Su-Swabhava (*Urdhvapade chaturabhangi swabhava karau mastakai*); Bhavachandra (*Hastapadauryogamudra Bhavachandra sunartaki*); Mrigakshi (*Mrigakshi sakala nrtya*); Rambha (*Hastadvayen chhurakai dhratva nrtyam cha kurvate. Urdhvikrta dakshapadam namna Rambha nartaki*); Manjughosha (*Nrtyavartam cha kurvati*); Jaya (*Shirasikalasham dhratva Jaya nrtyam cha kurvati*) and other *Devangana*-s.<sup>10</sup> In fact, it was only in a dance-posture that non-sectarian, ornamental *Devangana*-s were ordained to be presented on the temple walls.

This is illustrated by the graceful *Devangana* sculptures used extensively on the temples of Khajuraho which were built from 950 to 1050 A.D.

It must be borne in mind in this connection that the *Shashtra* was compiled after long practice and only when the idiom was standardised and ideals established. Actual practice always preceded the *Shashtra* by several centuries, in some cases by millennia. Thus, what the *NS* recorded in the third century A.D. was the standardised idiom and ideals which had evolved after a long practice of a millennium or more. Likewise, the *KSV* dicta prescribing *Devangana*-s in dancing postures to be used for ornamentation on the temple walls recorded what had been the actual practice for quite a long

time, presumably since the Gupta period which set the trend. This is a unique feature of the art of India which had a sound theoretical basis. Art in India was never an unrestrained and sentimental pursuit of the 'beautiful'; as soon as the climax of aesthetic expression in any discipline was attained, its intellectualisation took over and a precise *Shastra* was written down to regulate and control its course, and to prevent decay and decline. Indian art stood on a secure and solid foundation of *Shastra* and this is what we understand by its classical character.

The Parshvanath Jaina Temple which is one of the earliest temples of Khajuraho has exceptionally beautiful *Devangana*-s. They are bold, lively and wonderfully wrought (Plates I to IV). Though each, one of them is an ornamental sculpture commissioned into the service of architecture, it can stand independent of any structure whatsoever, as art in its own right. The three largest temples of Khajuraho—the Kandariya, the Vishwanatha and the Lakshmana, have similar sculptures in the *parshvalinda*-s (aisles on the sides of the *mahamandapa*) (Plates V to VII), each one standing on its own pedestal, entirely lost in its own act. They are as lovely and graceful as are the *vrakshika*-s (tree-nymphs) which adorn the capitals of the *mahamandapa* and *antarala* pillars of these temples (Plate VIII for example). Similar *Devangana*-s have also been used on the *bhadra*-s and *karna*-s of these temples in three or two bands along the three sides of the exterior (Plates IX to XIII) and also on other temples of Khajuraho (Plate XIV).

These *Devangana*-s are shown engaged in the following acts:

(1) *Playing with a ball*: as shown in Plates VIII and XII (upper left figure), the body is twisted and poised in an attempt to throw the ball in a direction, adopting a graceful dance-posture which may be the *Bhujangatrasita*<sup>11</sup> or *Bhujangachitakam*<sup>12</sup>. The simple act could have been shown without the posture, which has been incorporated deliberately to bestow an artistic effect to the figure. It is comparable to the *Marichika* (without the bow), *Su-swabhava* and *Chandravakra Devangana*-s of the KSV text.

(2) *Holding a mirror* (either applying *bindi* on the forehead or *sindura* in the *manga*): Plates VI, IX (lowest band, left figure), X, XI (lowest band) and XII (lower band, right and left figures) depict these figures. Each one stands in a graceful dance-posture with the entire weight of the body resting on one leg, the body twisting on three points and the head bending slightly forward towards the mirror. It is the *Vidhichita* of the KSV. It is noteworthy that in a large number of cases, a dance-posture has not been so completely imitated as to enable us to identify it and fix it within the rules of a treatise; it is followed only partially. Though each *Devangana* is engaged in her own act of holding a mirror, the standing figure is poised in a particular manner which is essentially a *Nrta*-way.

(3) *Removing a thorn from, or applying mahawara or mehndi on the foot*: Plates I, V, XI (middle band, central figure) and XIII (middle band, right figure) depict these figures. In each case the figure stands on one leg, the other is bent upward with the characteristic twists and bends of a dance-pos-

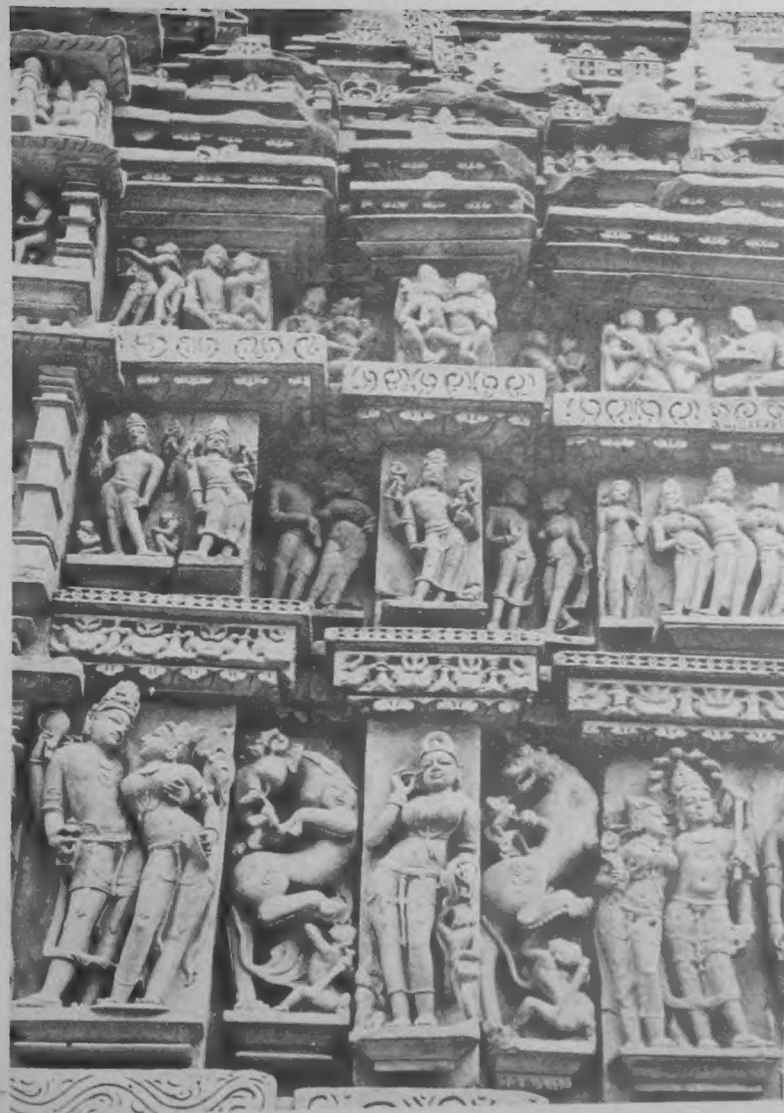


Plate III



Plate IV



Plate V





Plate VI



Plate VII

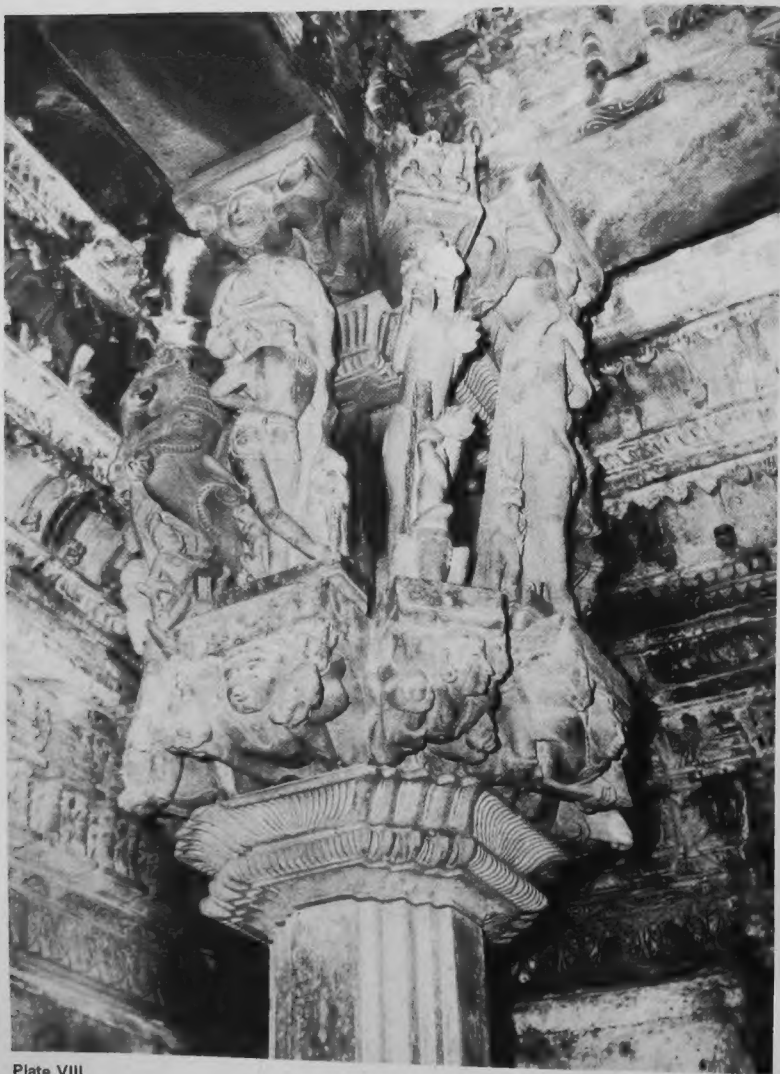


Plate VIII

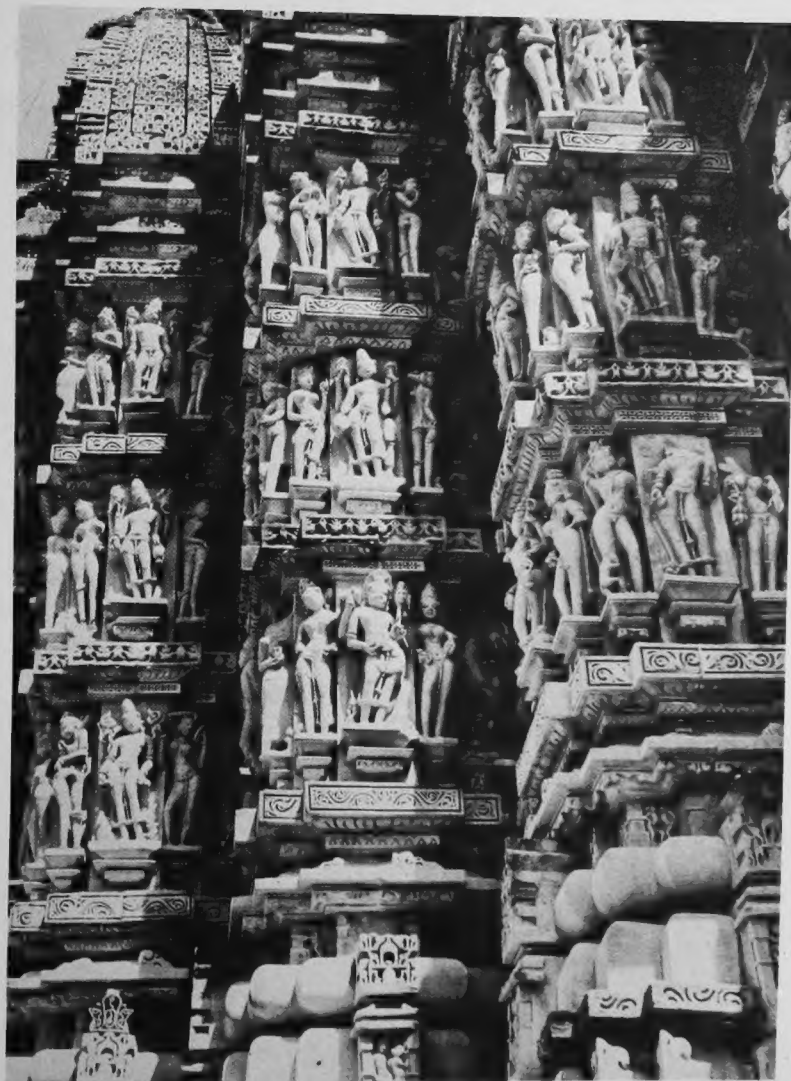


Plate IX

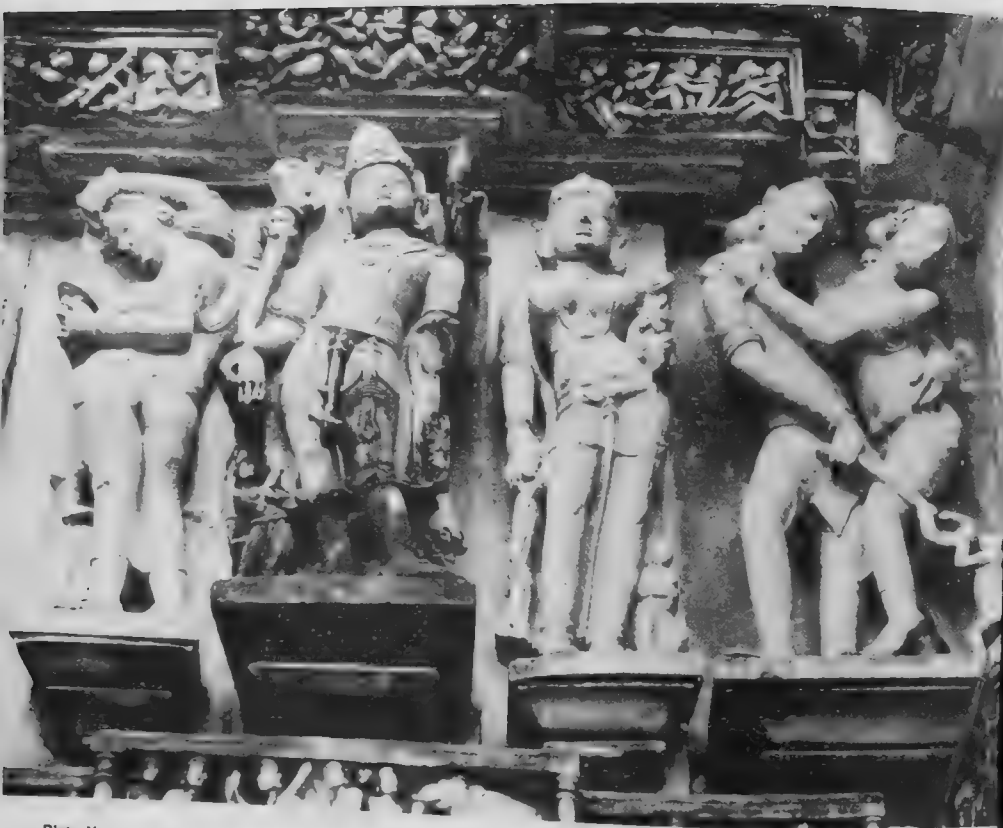


Plate X

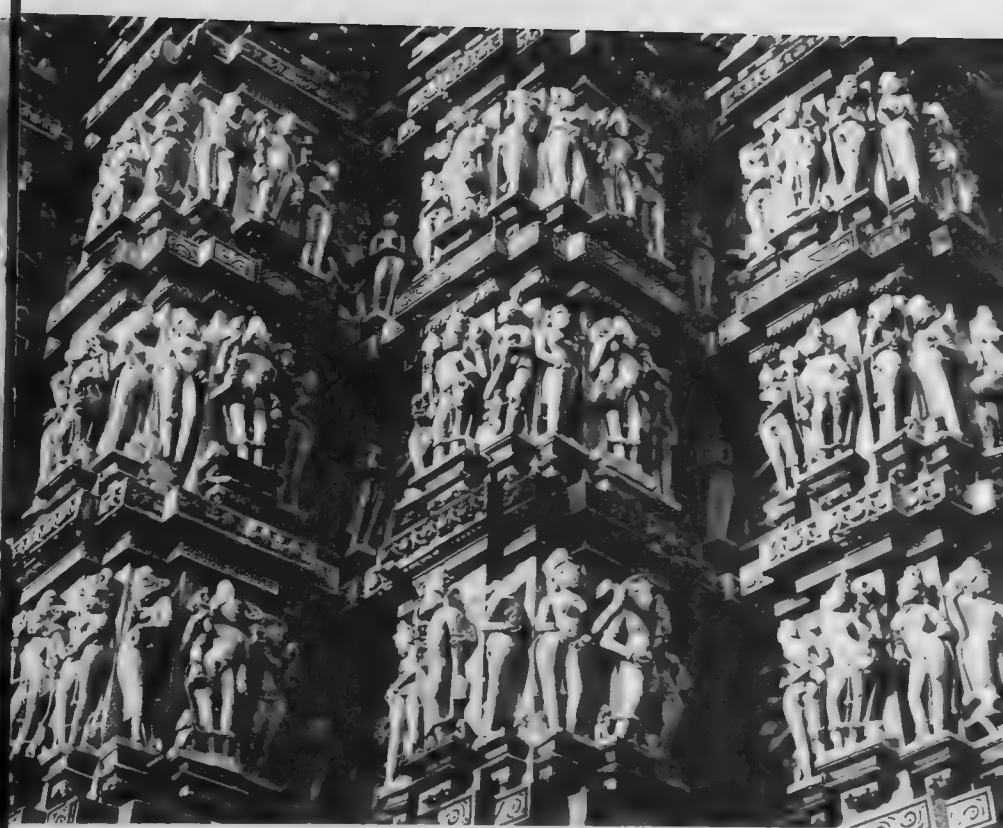


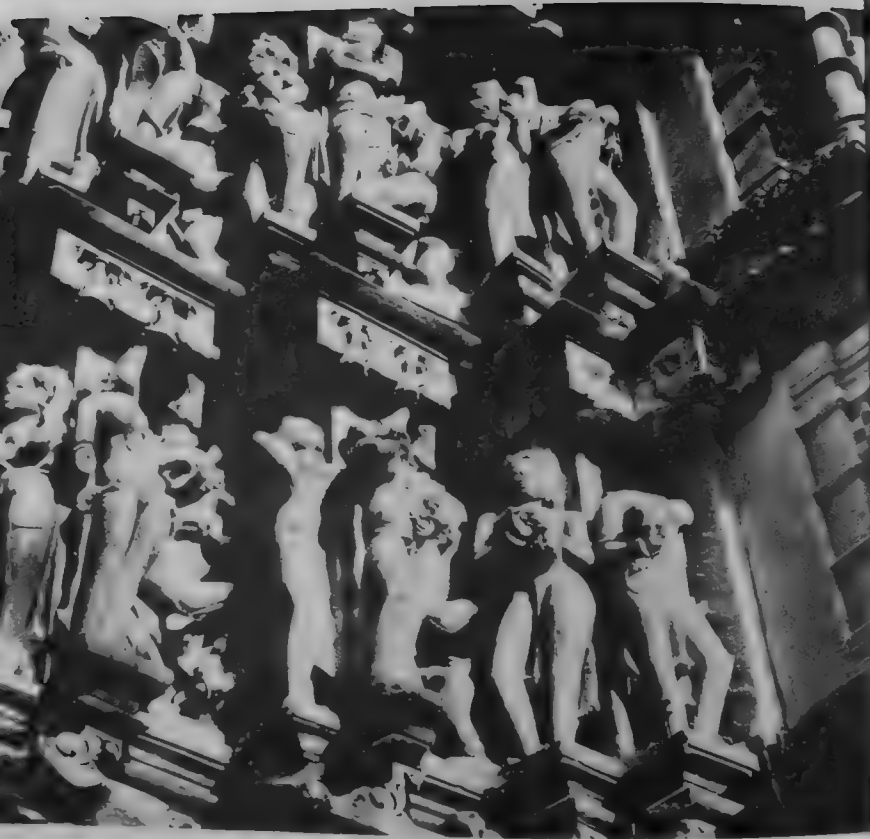
Plate XI



Plate XII



Plate XIII



ture. The KSV described these figures in dance-postures as *Shubhagamini* and *Manahamsa*. It is noteworthy that normally a woman engages in one of these acts in a sitting posture; the artist has always depicted them here only in a standing posture which is, almost as a rule, a dance-posture.

(4) *Applying kajal*: Plate III depicts this figure, again standing in a dance-posture, resting on one leg, the other easily bending on the knee, with the whole body inclined on one side for support.

(5) *Bearing a kalash on the head or in the hand or worshipping, offering water or flowers*: Plates IX, XI and XIII depict such figures. In each case, the *Devangana* stands in a dance-posture. It may be reiterated that each one is a unique adaptation of the prescription and not a literal imitation. Thus the *Devangana* is not shown in a regular dance-act, but engaged in something else with the figure, head, eyes and legs poised in a dance-posture. These figures, to be precise, do not stand as they would have in a natural way but always in a dance-posture. The KSV describes them under *Jaya* and other *Devangana*-s.

(6) *Uncovering under intense Kama—passion*: Plate XI depicts two such figures (middle band, left figure and lowest band, right figure). In each case, the figure stands on one leg, the other is slightly raised and bent forward and the body bears three curves: on the knee, waist and neck. Gracefully poised on its own pedestal, each one appears to breathe heavily due to an intense feeling. The artistic posture has lent credence to a lively figure.

(7) *Squeezing the hair dry after a bath or dressing*: Plates IX, XI and XIII depict such figures. As in the foregoing cases, each one stands in a dance-posture, though she apparently appears to be busy otherwise. The KSV text described such *Devangana*-s under various titles.

(8) *Singing, playing the flute or musical instruments or dancing*: Figures engaged in musical performance and dancing figures have been used at Khajuraho very frequently. Plate VII depicts a typical dancing figure. This shows the extent to which a dance-posture could bestow effect to the mass of stone that a sculpture represents. So faithfully and truthful is the depiction of the former that the latter is entirely lost; the sculpture is so vibrant with the motion of the dance that it is impossible to believe that it is a piece of stone! The KSV text has a general comment on the prescription of these dancing figures.

(9) *Writing a letter*: The KSV text described this figure under *Patralekha*; the figure has been frequently depicted at Khajuraho, standing gracefully in a dance-posture like other *Devangana*-s.

(10) *Waiting on the threshold or standing by the pillar in Chinta* (anxiety); or *Alasya* (indolence); or *Vibodha* (awakening) and any one of the 33 Shastric transitory states, e.g. *Shanka* (apprehension); *Shrama* (weariness); *Harsha* (joy); *Autsukya* (impatience); *Smrti* (recollection); *Vrida* (bashfulness); *Chapalya* (inconstancy) etc. Such figures, looking pensive or thought-



ful, have been most frequently used at Khajuraho and Plates II, IV, IX, XI, XIII and XIV depict some examples. Each one is a beautiful figure, standing in a graceful posture which is again a dance-posture. These have been described by the KSV under various heads.

As these examples adequately demonstrate, the dance-posture gives each sculpture a rhythm which is its soul or spirit. It is this which makes it a *Chitra* in the right sense of the term. The stone-mass seems to breathe and pulsate like a living organism as a result of this rhythm arising out of dance-postures. Hence the dictum of the *Shastra*.

नृत्यं चित्रं यत् मतम् ।

It is this unique aspect of Indian Art which distinguishes it from Greek Art or any other art of the world. Greek Sculpture, for example, is an art of the Form, excellent Form. But it lacks that soul or spirit, the rhythm which is the basic characteristic of Indian Sculpture. The rhythm stems from dance-postures, and instils life into its form. Over and above the art of Form, Indian Art is an art of soul and an art of spirit too. The *Shastra*-s ordained a little in respect of the Form, they prescribed in detail in respect of the Soul.

#### References:

- 1 The *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, Vol. I (ed. and tr. Madhusudan Shastri, Chowkhumbha, Varanasi, 1971) hereinafter referred to as *NS*
- 2 *NS*, IV 4-10
- 3 *Ibid*, IV 13
- 4 *Vishnudharmottara-Purana*, Third Khanda (ed. Priyabala Shah, G.O.S. No. CXXX, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1958) hereinafter referred to as the *VDP*. This volume of the *VDP* deals exclusively with the Fine Arts, e.g. *Kavya* and *Gita* (Poetry), *Sangita* (Music), *Nritya* (Dance with Drama); *Nritya* (Dance); *Chitra* (Painting and Sculpture); *Pratima* (Iconography) and *Vastu* (Architecture).
- 5 *Aparajitaprachhina* (ed. P.A. Mankad, G.O.S. No. CXV, Oriental Institute, Baroda) hereinafter referred to as the *AP*
- 6 *Samarangana-Sutradhara* (ed. V. S. Agarwal, G.O.S. No. 25, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1966), p. 635, hereinafter referred to as the *SS*
- 7 How far Sculptural Aestheticism in India was simply outlined by the prescribed icon and how far it was essentially the result of the artist's doing (as determined by his genius and training) has been discussed by the present author in his paper 'Bhu-Varaha Sculptures: Indian Art vis-a-vis the Iconographic Prescriptions', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Pune, Diamond Jubilee Volume, 1977-78, pp. 799-811.
- 8 For a study of the ornaments of the Hindu temple, reference may be made to the present author's 'Lehara-Vallari in Indian Art', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Calcutta, Vol. X, No. 2 (July 1975) pp. 57-70. *Mithuna*-s call for an extremely important and independent study; this subject has been dealt with separately by the present author in his articles 'Rason d'être of *Mithuna* depiction on the Hindu Temple', *National Museum Bulletin*, New Delhi (in print) and 'Notice on an important reference to the erotic depiction in the 15th century Hindi work '*Chhatai-Chari'*, *Shodh-Patrika*, Udaipur, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April-June 1977) and in greater detail in the monograph entitled 'Introduction to the Art of Khajuraho' (Abhinav, New Delhi, in press, to be released shortly). The *NS*, the *Chitra-Sutra* of the *VDP*, the *SS* and other texts deal with the *Sthana*-s (postures-in-perspective) and *Shilpa-Padas* (sentiments related to Plastic Arts) in detail; they constitute a separate subject of investigation and have not been included in this study. An allusion to the three-dimensional aspect of the Plastic Arts—how the things and effect thereof have differed from the incised-carving to bold and round relief has been made in the present author's paper 'Bhu-Varaha Sculptures' *op. cit.* This, too, calls for an independent, consistent and detailed study, separately.
- 9 The *Kshirarnava* (ed. and tr. by P. O. Sompura, Palitana, 1967) hereinafter referred to as the *KSV*.
- 10 *KSV*, CXX 113-131.
- 11 *NS*, IV 84-85
- 12 *Ibid*, IV 100-101

## Why Study Ancient Musical Texts?

Mukund Lath

The question that forms the title of this essay is not intended to be rhetorical or just a verbal device to catch attention. The value of studying ancient musical texts is by no means generally granted, even by those who are seriously involved in the pursuit of music. It is common enough to be accosted with the question: Of what use is the study of old texts for an understanding of our musical art?

As a student of ancient musical texts, I would like to ponder over this question and enter into some of its ramifications in order to seek answers.

There is often a curious paradox in our attitude to the past. Although in a certain mood of denunciation, we cast doubt on the value of studying old texts, yet, in a different frame of mind, we proudly proclaim and extol our music as age-old, rooted in time-immemorial. More often than not, however, this latter sentiment hardly amounts to anything more than paying lip-service to the past; the purpose, at times, being just to add value to the present, hike up the price of what we have by calling it an antique.

The truth remains that an understanding and appreciation of the historical dimension has never been a major aspect of our musical culture, or, for that matter, culture in general. It was common enough to praise the past, as it still is, or emulate it. But this attitude never gave rise to any concerted effort to study the forms and achievements of the past in any kind of a historical perspective. No real attempt was made to perceive forms of the past as points in a process of change, a process itself worthy of serious study.

Early writers on music have, no doubt, described and even, in a skeletal form, notated older music as it was current during their time, or as they found it outlined in earlier texts. But they hardly ever asked themselves the historian's questions: How, through what process, have forms changed? How did newer forms come out of the old and in the shape they did? Why did change take place, what was its character, what were the factors that led to it? Even if the old texts do sometimes speak of these matters, they do so indirectly, in the course of speaking of other things, or in a very cursory, superficial manner. Such questions were never uppermost in their mind. Certain writers of the older texts were so indifferent to chronology that in describing or naming forms, they did not bother to keep the old and the new apart. Modern scholars have remarked on the frustrating difficulties of historically sifting the forms described in a number of musical manuals.

Compared to the past, history today receives far more serious thought in musical circles. Historical questions engage our minds and pro-

vide an impulse for earnest enquiry. Direct access to a greater range of forms (rendered over a larger span of time) is now also available to us, thanks to the invention of recording devices. We can now actually hear a musician of the past, even if only of the recent past, on recordings. Our experience remains fragmentary, limited to bits and scraps which were recorded—and that, too, quite indifferently by more modern standards; yet to be able to actually hear an Abdul Karim, a musician separated from us by two generations, would have been unimaginable in earlier times. This extension in our range certainly adds to the total quality of our experience and widens our response.

But though more responsive, in some ways, to history, a historical awareness has not quite become ingrained in our general outlook. A nonchalant disregard for history shows itself, for example, in the interminable quarrels over the 'purity' of a *raga*. The notion of 'purity' is, in such contexts, admittedly complex; but it has an aspect that is certainly historical. To elucidate this point, I would like to examine some of the assumptions which we tacitly make when we discuss the 'purity' of a *raga*. One assumption is that a *raga* was created once and for all at a certain point in time, and every specific rendering of it is an attempt at a true copy of the original, pristine form. The more successful the attempt the 'purer' the *raga*. Variants occur because of 'impure' copies multiplied over time and against these one must guard. Implied clearly are two further assumptions: one, that we always have direct access to the original blue-print of a *raga*, for otherwise we cannot speak of true copies; two, that *raga*-s are conceived as immutable forms to be handed down.

Now, to decide whether these assumptions are justified or not surely calls for a probe into the manner in which *raga*-s are conceived and transmitted in our tradition and how good our chances are of reaching back to the original form of a *raga*, especially if it is an old *raga*. What is called for is, in short, a historical probe. But though we are often quick in passing judgements with respect to 'purity', we hardly undertake the necessary enquiry.

The truth is that quarrels over 'purity' usually boil down to quarrels over favourites. These are, more often than not, battles between partisans supporting different artistes or loyal to certain *gharana*-s, battles in which 'purity' is bandied about as a weapon. The interest is not really in discovering this 'purity' whose roots lie in the past, but in championing a cause.

In the Indian poetic tradition, a discerning *sahridaya*—a man who could aesthetically respond to a poetic utterance—had before him a large body of literature, spread over centuries. The nature of a *sahridaya*'s response, however, hardly took the time factor into account; it was largely aesthetic. In evaluating poems, questions like when it was written, how it was historically connected with prior works, how it reflected its own period of time, were rarely taken into consideration. Much thought was expended on certain problems; What distinguished a poetic utterance from utterances in general? What constituted poetic merits and blemishes? What were the distinguishing characteristics of the aesthetic experience which poetry

aroused? The almost unanimous answer to this last question was: *rasa*, understood as a conglomerate of factors that differentiated the aesthetic from other experiences. *Rasa*, interestingly enough, was placed in a realm beyond time, like mystic experience. No wonder, then, that poets separated by centuries were evaluated without really taking these intervening centuries into account. The attitude, to use the terminology of linguistics and social science, was synchronic, rather than diachronic. The history of Sanskrit literature was not born, understandably enough, till modern times.

Our musical culture, today, is, in its aesthetic attitude, similar to the ancient poetic culture: historical interest has come to be a part of it but this interest is still peripheral. We value forms for themselves, for the wealth and variety of aesthetic experience they can afford us. We are not really interested in probing into how forms are linked over time, how they change, how one leads to another or moves away from another. We respond to what appeals, without caring much for how it is embedded in time and history. The fact that the notion of *rasa* looms so large in our evaluation of music is also to a degree indicative of its ahistorical character: the *rasa* mode of aesthetic perception does not take history into account.

My purpose here is not to deny that art can transcend time. On the contrary, I quite share the view that art is nothing if it does not have something to say to us here and now, whenever it may have been created. Greek sculpture, the ancient Indian temples, the Ajanta murals, Renaissance painting, to name only a few random examples, are great creations of art, not merely because of their historical importance, but because they have a quality of being ever-contemporary; we can respond to them across time, in spite of time.

Yet if the purpose of art is to enrich experience, then viewing objects of art with some understanding of their history, undoubtedly, adds a new magnitude to our awareness of their nature. History gives a perspective to our consciousness by placing objects in a total cultural milieu horizontally, as an object placed alongside many others at a certain moment of time; vertically, as an object viewed in company with those that followed, across time. This perspective helps us to understand the dynamic interconnections between forms, how they interact with each other as well as with the general human situation of which they are a part. We learn how and in what aspect they change or remain constant.

## II

The sole reason why the history of music in India remains neglected or feeble as a discipline is not because of any disinclination to study its development. There are also certain other problems inherent in an exploration of this kind. History can be studied only through the traces left by

the past. In studying art-history, the major traces or data are the art-objects themselves. For social, economic, and political history, the historian does not need to have a direct observation of those events, people, movements and forces which he seeks to study. He can derive the knowledge he needs from evidence, documents, records, literature and similar other traces of the past and these are often enough for his purposes; such data, indeed, are the standard grist for the historian's mill.

But art, by its very nature, imposes a different demand. In art, the palpable particular, the form as it was created, is of supreme importance. For the secret of art lies in the actual object of art, something that can be directly, sensuously apprehended.

This is where the historian of music in India faces an insurmountable hurdle. Beyond a certain period, one which hardly extends beyond the comparatively recent past, direct experience of music as actually rendered becomes almost an impossibility. In the field of plastic arts and of literature, forms have survived from the distant past, though with greater or lesser abundance for different periods. These forms, moreover, can be placed more or less securely within epochs and often within fairly narrow limits of time. We actually have architecture, sculpture and painting dating back to two thousand years and more. But can we say the same for music, or the other performing arts for that matter?

Many, it is sure, would assert that we do indeed have ancient musical forms even today. Our contemporary classical music, they would say, embodies forms which are, in truth, age-old. But how old our forms are, and in what exact sense 'old', is a moot question. A look at the nature of the tradition in which they have been preserved and are handed over will, I believe, throw some light on the matter.

In the West, music going back from the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries to the Renaissance, and even to some extent to the Middle Ages, has been preserved more or less in the shape it was originally given. This has been done through a sophisticated system of notation and an endeavour, rooted in Western musical culture, to preserve compositions intact (an endeavour, which today has become more than ever refined through research, resulting in attempts by learned bodies to recapture the very tone of old music). True, we listen to the early Western composers only through renderings by modern artistes and it is well-known that a conductor or performer will impart his own interpretative nuance to a work, even if unconsciously. Yet a contemporary interpretation of earlier music is never allowed to stray too far from the original, notations of which can always be referred back to. Any performance of Bach remains unmistakably Bach despite differences in approach.

Things are quite different in Indian classical music, more markedly perhaps in its Hindustani form. When we hear a Bhimsen Joshi or a Kumar Gandhera, or any other great contemporary, sing *khyal*-s by the eighteenth century composers, Sadarang or Adarang, it is singularly impossible

to tell how much of the music to which we are listening is truly eighteenth century music.

One reason is that though we clamour for 'purity' and wage battles over it, yet, paradoxically enough, we consider no artiste an *ustad*, a master, if he is not truly original. What we cherish in an artiste is his individual creative genius, his unique musical vision. Even older masters, with whom we are still closely familiar, Faiyaz Khan, Abdul Karim Khan, Amir Khan, were all prized for this quality. An *ustad*, moreover, is not expected to show creative genius merely through composing new pieces and developing a new style and idiom in which he renders these new pieces. What is really expected of him is that his own unique imagination and artistic conception should be writ large on whatever he is performing, whether it is a Sadarang *khyal* or his own composition. A sensitive Western performer or conductor, too, may have a unique style, an individual flavour that enters into whatever he renders, but never do we mistake Bach's creation for another's. On the other hand, a great Hindustani performer is more akin to a creative Renaissance sculptor, who, in copying a Greek or Roman model, transformed it into something quite his own.

The value placed by modern Hindustani music culture on uniqueness of vision in rendering *khyal* is not an accidental or contingent matter. It is not a new and sudden growth, entirely different in spirit from Indian musical culture and tradition as a whole. Even a little reflection will show that the factor which accounts for the Hindustani musician's cultivation of uniqueness is a factor which evidently has been inherent in Indian music for centuries. I have in mind the central role we have assigned to improvisation.

Improvisation is woven into the very fabric of our music-making. In teaching forms, what is transmitted is not only a corpus of music but also a manner and technique of improvisation, the two elements being inextricably interwoven. Hindustani music, in its *khyal* and allied forms, perhaps places more stress on improvisation but in this, it only errs on the right side and does not introduce a totally new element uncharacteristic of our music. Evidently, it was always the practice in our music that a *shishya* could become a master not merely through being able to reproduce forms, however skilfully and expressively, but by succeeding in handling forms he had learnt in such a manner as to transform them creatively. A man of towering genius could even gloriously transfigure them.

The role of improvisation seems however to have varied in degree and extent. It could be subjected to greater or lesser constraints. Thus compared to the Hindustani tradition, Karnatic music has been exercising more controls on improvisation by limiting it more strictly, at least in certain areas such as the rendering of *kriti*-s. Compositions of old masters like Tyagraja are carefully guarded from the mutating encroachment of improvisation. Consequently, we have a more secure assurance that *kriti*-s have been handed down undistorted. In the North, on the other hand, an old *cheez* (composition) can have as many sharply distinct variations as *gharana*-s,

or even musicians; for within a *gharana*, too, individual variations are not uncommon.

But improvisation, though confined, is still given a major role in Karnatic music. A *kriti* within a *raga* may be carefully guarded from mutation but the totality of a *raga*-presentation does allow plenty of room for improvisation. How much of this has slowly crept into the *kriti*-s themselves poses a genuine query.

The basic problem for a historian, in this context, is, how to measure the extent of variation in an old form. Seeking an answer is a frustrating exercise because there was no sophisticated system of notation (subtle enough to record all the contours of a *kriti* or a *cheez* before recent times) against which a check can be made. We are, perforce, left to intelligent guesses on the basis of known musical practice and tradition.

But even if we grant that in the *kriti*-s we have truly been able to preserve old music in the original, how far back does this take us? Hardly more than two centuries.

*Dhrupad*, one may say, takes us further back. And it is certainly true that *dhrupad* as a form and style goes back to the fifteenth century and perhaps earlier. But the pertinent question again surely is: how old are the *dhrupad*-s that we have? No exact answer can be given. Many *dhrupad*-s are certainly older than the current *khyal*-s, and *dhrupad*, in general, undoubtedly, preserves an earlier musical idiom. Also, relative to the *khyal*, *dhrupad* is guarded with greater caution against mutating influences. Still, it is difficult to get rid of the feeling that this care to preserve *dhrupad*-s has acquired greater fervour only after the ascendancy of the *khyal*. Earlier *dhrupad*-s too seem to have been in a similar state of flux: witness, for example, the great variations to be found in the same *dhrupad* as sung in different *gharana*-s. The element that varies sometimes is not only a pattern here and there, within the same *raga*, but the *raga* itself. We find that the same Tansen *dhrupad* is sung to one *raga* in the Dagar *gharana*, but to a different *raga* in Vishnupur. A further complexity is added by the presence in the past of four *bani*-s, four different modes of rendering *dhrupad*, which must also have multiplied mutations.

Here again, in the absence of a proper notation system before recent times, it is impossible to gauge the extent to which improvisation has transformed forms. A search for the original can turn out to be, as the proverb goes, like a hunt for the primal trunk of an ancient, overgrown banyan tree. Unlike in the West, no need was felt in India to develop a sophisticated system of notation for recording music with exactitude. A notation system has been in existence for some centuries, at least since the *Brihaddeshi* (circa 7th century A.D.), but it was too crude to be an appropriate vehicle for the music it was meant to record. The little that has been recorded is, moreover, skeletal and minimal, besides being, for us, enigmatic. It cannot convey a true picture of the totality of music that obtained. The reason why so little was recorded was that, as is the case today, what was conveyed from

one generation to another consisted not only of a collection of forms, but also of modes and principles of improvisation by which to develop them; notation could be of no more than rudimentary or secondary use for this purpose. Before the introduction of recording devices like the gramophone disc and the tape-recorder, a full-fledged musical structure, such as that of a *raga*, could never be captured in its entirety.

Given the material that we have and the nature of the tradition, an attempt to reconstruct the music of the past in any palpable form does not appear to be a promising venture. Yet attempts are certainly worth making and perhaps with more research and greater knowledge, in depth, the notation preserved in works like the *Brihaddeshi* (circa 7th century A.D.), the *Sangita Ratnakara* (13th century A.D.) will begin acquiring a breath of life instead of remaining mere signs to puzzle over.

It would be interesting here to note that Rana Kumbha, the Mewar king, had in the fifteenth century made an attempt to recapture old forms. In introducing his monumental *Sangitaraja*, he asserts that he had not only read descriptions of ancient forms in ancient texts, he had also tried to experience these forms directly ('*anubhuyarthatah*': *Sangitaraja*, 1, 1, 1, 37). Later in his work he even gives his own reconstruction of *jati*-s, *kambala gana* and the like, forms which in his days were no longer extant. The attempt seems to have been, in many essentials, a failure, as I have elsewhere tried to show (*A Study of Dattilam*, pp. 180-181). But it was certainly an attempt worth making. Also for his times, it was a rare endeavour. Again in his commentary on the *Gitagovinda*, Jayadeva's famous poem composed in the twelfth century, Rana Kumbha tells us that he had searched for a commentary on the work that could reveal the music to which it was set. Finding none, he set Jayadeva's *ashtapadi*-s to his own music (*Rasikapriya*, 1, 15, 16; the entire work is full of musical details; also *Sangitaraja* 2, 4, 2, 28-29). For us, his music, too, remains a closed book as it is not recorded in notation, but in terms of hints that could have aided a contemporary musician to improvise.

### III

But if we have no music from ancient times, we have a reasonably rich array of musical texts and manuals. Another major source of information is the large corpus of sculpture, painting and imaginative literature from different periods. This latter body of evidence reveals a great deal about the context in which music was made, its social, cultural paraphernalia and its apparatus. Sculpture has many portrayals of musical instruments, and sculptural history can project a picture of how they have changed over time. So can painting, which has, in addition, preserved pictures of music and dance concerts in a more vivid, realistic manner than sculpture. Literature is a still richer source. It provides us with insights into the role of music in general culture. It reflects details of the social, human background into

which music was integrated, presenting us with a lively idea of the diversity of musical practice, the varied functions of musical forms and the complexity of attitudes towards them. Literary works also contain helpful details concerning technical terms of music, since many poets and imaginative writers were men groomed in a many-sided culture, and well-grounded in music.

The texts and manuals, however, remain the primary data. They are all that we have on music as such. Other evidence can be corroborative or augmentative; the texts are foundational. A student of musical history is perforce led to squeeze as much out of them as he can.

The earliest material on music we have is the large though often scattered body of writings in Vedic literature. This material contains very interesting reflections on music and mirrors an ethos, echoes of which are present in our music culture to this day. But music in this literature is not an object of analytic and descriptive study.

We do not know when the study began to assume such a character. Perhaps at the time when the study of the Vedic language was emerging as a methodical science in the three *Vedanga*-s: *Nirukta*, *Vyakarana* and *Shiksha*. Yaska's *Nirukta* goes back to the seventh century B.C., Panini's *Vyakarana* is two or three centuries later, *Shiksha* works are later still. The tradition of these *Vedanga*-s, devoted to analysing language semantically, grammatically and phonetically, is older and goes back to the eighth and ninth centuries B.C.

The impetus for these *Vedanga* studies was provided by the need to conserve and understand *mantra*, the Vedic speech. *Sama*, the Vedic song, was as sacred as the *mantra*. It is reasonable to suppose that the study of *sama* music began at the same time as the *Vedanga*-studies devoted to *mantra*, and with a parallel intention. The earliest work of this nature that we have is, however, a relatively late work, the *Naradi Shiksha*, which like other works of the *Shiksha* genre, belongs to the beginning of the Christian era and is not quite free from even later interpolations. But *Shiksha*, as a branch of study, is as old as the other *Vedanga*-s. A *Shiksha* when devoted to *mantra* was a phonetic study; devoted to *sama*, it was a study of music. No other *shiksha* on *sama*, besides the *Naradi*, survives.

*Naradi Shiksha*, along with the richer and more organised *Dattilam* and *Natya Shastra*, can perhaps be placed in roughly the same chronological bracket. Somewhat later, more scattered material is to be found in the small sections on music in the Jain canonic *Thananga Sutta* and the older *Purana*-s.

These are all works antedating the *Brihaddeshi*, usually placed in the seventh century. With this work we come to a new group of texts, which while borrowing the old conceptual framework and material, are yet devoted to newer interests and forms. This is a fairly large group, representative

works being the *Bharata Bhasya*, the musical section in the *Manasollasa*, *Sangita Chintamani*, *Sangita-Samaya-Sara* and, above all, the *Sangita Ratnakara* (early 13th century A.D.).

With the thirteenth century there appears a lull in textual activity which begins anew with newer interests in the fifteenth century. Many old traditions continue, earlier material is still incorporated, but there is a sharp change in the conceptual framework, reflecting a major upheaval in music. Many old terms acquire a new content. Some new terms and concepts become consequential. Also, now begins a division of the large material we have into Hindustani and Karnatic.

#### IV

The above brief, and even perhaps at places controversial, survey is meant to convey some idea of the range of material spread over time. A few words now concerning the character of this literature, what we can learn from it and what we cannot.

Texts from the *Naradi Shiksha* onwards contain a rich vocabulary for analysing and describing musical forms. But as we have noted earlier, before the *Brihaddeshi* there is no attempt at mapping structures precisely, or, in other words, to notate them. In fact, it is in this text that we first meet with the syllables, *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma*, as abbreviated signs for musical notes. *Dattilam*, written some centuries earlier, evinces great effort at brevity and some very ingenious formula-like descriptive devices. But the *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma* syllables are not used. In this text, as well as the *Natya Shastra* and the *Naradi Shiksha*, the name of a note is always fully spelt out: *shadja*, *rishabha*, *gandhara* and so forth. Abbreviations must have developed sometime after these texts, which were written in the first or second centuries A.D. and the seventh century, the probable date of the *Brihaddeshi*.

Not only was a notation system unknown, no method of measuring tones through string-lengths or a similar precise manner was developed. Musicians played by the ear, even as today. In fact, it is not till the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries that we find tones being given in string-lengths. This further compounds the difficulty of knowing ancient forms with any exactitude.

The texts, it appears, were written and studied within a well-established *sampradaya*, a tradition of musical culture in which a basic knowledge of forms, a training of the ear, and a general understanding of the framework of music was already assumed in a student. Details about forms in ancient texts abound, but they only concern general features, individual details are left to the knowledgeable students to fill in.

The reason for this lies not only in the fact that these were advanced manuals, but also, evidently, in the forms themselves. The ancient *jati*-s were *raga*-like structures and have been proclaimed as the progenitors of *raga*-s. Like the *raga*-s, the *jati*-s were forms which could only be described



in their general formal features, through stating the principles of their structural formation, because they allowed room for free movement or improvisation. This freedom was extremely restricted and hedged round by numerous limits because *jati-s* were sacred structures, similar in this aspect to Vedic *sama*. Every movement in them, like ritual action in the *yajna*, was determined through rules. Yet, unlike *sama*, they did allow freedom. With them an entirely new element was introduced into Indian music: the nucleus for our *raga-s* was born. *Jati-s* gave rise to other forms in which the principles governing melodic movement were gradually loosened, modified, transformed, reduced in number and importance. It is this line of development to which *raga-s* belong.

A study of ancient texts can, therefore, help us form a picture of how these principles for improvisation have changed over time and come to be what they are today. And here we have an example of the kind of history, which the texts can help to formulate. In respect to exact form, however, the texts present a picture somewhat analogous to an archaeological site, revealing bare ground-plans or sometimes only clues to these, the rest of the structure being left to the imagination. In our case we have the present forms, embodying many ancient principles of construction, to help the imagination.

Besides forms, music has a conceptual framework with multiple functions: analysing forms, describing them, commenting on them aesthetically, spiritually, metaphysically, scientifically and in other ways in which we do talk about music and relate it to the rest of our experience. This framework itself has a history which reflects the history of forms themselves. Here the texts offer a rich fare to the historian.

The texts can also be instructive to us. Today we have gained in being able to describe forms with greater quantitative accuracy. But we have lost much in the keenness and penetration of analysis found in the best of the earlier texts.

They can also have a clarifying role. Earlier I had spoken of quarrels over the 'purity' of *raga*. An historical understanding of the character of *raga*, as a form, will surely help us to see the issue in a clearer light and the fight over it will be less dogmatic.

Many musical terms such as *shruti*, *svara*, *murchana*, *tana*, *varna*, among others, have been with us for centuries. Their meaning-content has been changing with change in music. But the constancy of the use of the terms themselves tends to create the false impression that meanings, too, have remained unchanged. Consequently, layers of meaning, which have become mixed up, create confusion or bewilderment when we apply these terms today. A historical study of these terms, to use an archaeological analogy again, can help us separate various strata of meaning and perhaps dispel some confusion.

## Bhagavata Mela Nataka (Dance-dramas of Melattur)

Text and Photographs

by

Sunil Kothari

The source-book of the various forms of Indian drama is invariably Bharata's compendium, the *Natyashastra*. The actual text and the commentary on this work contain a veritable mine of information about the technique and production of drama. The *Natyashastra* refers to a class of dramas called the *Dasharupaka-s*, the ten varieties of drama. They are listed in Chapter XVIII<sup>1</sup> and the technique of presenting these drama forms is described exhaustively at various points in the *Natyashastra*.

One striking feature of *Natya* is its intimate connection with dance which formed an integral part of drama. The essential nature of the term *Natya*, derived from its etymology, is very suggestive. In *Harivamsha* (circa 200 A.D.), we meet with the expression *natakam nanrutuh* (they danced a play) and Rajashekhara's *Karpuramanjari* (circa 1000 A.D.) has the expression, *Sattam nachchidavvam* (a *Sattaka* is to be danced or acted).

Varadraja Perumala temple at Melattur



On the contemporary Indian stage we notice two parallel streams: one of the solo dance and the other of dance-drama. The classical Indian drama is denoted by the term *rupaka*. The ancient Indian play was presented through words, gestures, postures, costumes, make-up, song and dance. Whenever necessary, instrumental music was also played. But these different elements did not play an equal part in all the plays. However, with the passage of time, a different genre of dramas with greater emphasis on dance and music developed. Many minor varieties of forms were classified in the post-Bharata period. These derivative types were termed as *Uparupaka-s* and they employed the principles laid down in the *Natyashastra*. *Kohala*<sup>2</sup> appears to be the most important writer next to Bharata. He seems to have codified and described these new types of drama and dramatic presentations. *Kohala's* work, however, is now lost to us but *Abhinavagupta* in his commentary on the *Natyashastra* often quotes from his writings.

The *Uparupaka* Chapter of the *Natyashastra* is very important for an understanding of the history and development of Indian dance-dramas. The Sanskrit drama, as envisaged by Bharata, appears to be in the nature of a dance-drama with music and dance movements. Roughly speaking the history of dance could be divided into two periods: from the second century B.C. to the ninth century A.D., and from the tenth century A.D. to the eighteenth century A.D. During the first period Sanskrit exercised a firm hold on intellectual life and its rich literature endowed the development of all arts in the country with unity and continuity. In the second period there was a marked development of the regional styles. The latter half of this period coincides with the growth of the various regional languages. The Sanskrit tradition continues beyond the tenth century A.D., suggesting what happened not only to the dramatic tradition but also to the theatrical traditions of India. By the time of *Karpuramanjari*<sup>3</sup> it is evident that the pure drama form had given place to the musical play which was perhaps known earlier but had not become so popular with the dramatist. *Karpuramanjari* has been called a *Sattaka*, a theatrical form, which is mentioned in the inscriptions of Bharhut, but a form of which no other literary examples seem to have survived. The growth of the musical play later on generally determined the dance-drama forms of the regional languages in the later medieval period. *Karpuramanjari* was perhaps akin to what is today known as the operatic dance-drama.

This brings us closer to the *Uparupaka* chapter of the *Natyashastra* treatises. The classification of many varieties of the *Uparupaka-s* found in *Abhinavabharati*, *Shringaraprakasha*, *Bhavaprakasha*, *Natyadarpana*, *Natakakalashanaratnakosha* and other texts include the *Kavya* and the *Chitra-kavya* types of the *Uparupaka-s*. Of the two, *Chitra-kavya* appears to have provided the inspiration to writers and *vaggeyakara-s* to model their own works on similar lines. Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* is an excellent example; it wielded a far-reaching influence on the development of the *Uparupaka* forms in the succeeding period. It occupies a key position in the history of both music and dance. It not only inspired numerous Sanskrit imitations but led to the flowering of a class of musical dance-dramas<sup>4</sup> in the local languages (sometimes mixed with Sanskrit) in different part of the country. The com-



*Patrapravesha daru* (Lilavati from *Prahlada Charitram*)

positions of Shankaradeva of Assam, of Umapati of Bihar, the Bhagavata Mela Natakas of Tamilnadu, the Yakshagana, Kuchipudi dance-dramas of Andhra, the Yakshagana of Karnataka, the Krishnattam and the Kathakali of Kerala all turn to the *Gita Govinda* as the ultimate source of their inspiration.

The dance-drama forms which developed in Andhra and Tamilnadu are thus a continuation of the tradition of the *Gita Govinda*. Inscriptions of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries support the existence of the dance-drama tradition in Andhra, Tamilnadu and Karnataka. Numerous theatrical diversions composed of music, dance and drama known as the Brahmana Mela appear to have existed in these regions. The Chola inscriptions<sup>5</sup> refer to a variety of drama called the *Ariyakuttu*, which was staged in the temples and it is not difficult to see, in this the Brahmana Mela, a Sanskritic, if not a Sanskrit, tradition of plays and performances.

The Bhakti movement and its influence in nurturing these art forms in the Andhra, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala region has been all-embracing in the spheres of the Performing and the Plastic Arts. Prior to the eleventh-twelfth century the tradition had been strongly Shaivite. With the appearance of the *Gita Govinda*, and its subsequent impact on the popular imagination, the religious impulse was directed towards the worship of Vishnu and his manifestations, particularly that of Krishna.

Thus the tradition of the Bhagavata Mela Nataka in Andhra and Tamilnadu came into being as a result of the Bhakti movement. Two devout poets, Tirtha Narayana Yati and Siddhendra Yogi, employed this art of

dance, music, song and drama using themes from the *Shrimad Bhagavata* and other *Purana*-s to extoll the principle of Bhakti. The artistes who practised this art came to be known as Bhagavatattulus in Andhra and Bhagavatars in Tamilnadu.

Of the two traditions of Brahmana Melas, the Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition appears to be an earlier one. The Brahmana Bhagavata Mela form of the Kuchipudi village dates back to 1502 A.D., to the reign of the Vijayanagar king, Vira Narsimha Raya and is mentioned in the Machupalli Kaifiat<sup>6</sup> of the local records.

After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire several Natyacharyas, along with other scholars and pandits from Andhra, found patronage under the Nayak kings of Tanjavur. In terms of the historical time-span, the Bhagavata Mela Nataka tradition is traced to the period of the Nayak kings of Tanjavur. One of them Achyutappa Nayak<sup>7</sup> (1572-1614), followed the tradition set by his father, Sevappa Nayak, and extended patronage to artistes, and during his reign the arts flourished in Tanjavur and its environs.

It is probable that the Kuchipudi Brahmin Bhagavatattulus were among those who migrated to Tamilnadu and developed the art of Bhagavata Mela Nataka at the village of Achyutapuram (present-day Melattur) on the model of the Kuchipudi dance-dramas using the then prevalent technique of Bharata Natyam.

It was customary for the kings to donate villages and land to Brahmin families.<sup>8</sup> Legend has it that King Achyutappa gifted away a village to 510 Brahmin families for the sole purpose of propagating and perpetuating the art of dance-drama and encouraging the spirit of Bhakti among his subjects. The *agraharam* thus formed was named after him and it is this village which has come to be known as Melattur. Each family received a house, a well and some acres of land. Melattur thus became the centre of fine arts as practised by the recipients of the village.

Tirtha Narayana Yati, the author of *Krishnalilatarangini*, was a sanyasin of Advaitic persuasion. He completed and dedicated his musical play on the story of Lord Krishna (from his birth to the marriage with Rukmini) at Varahur in the Tanjavur district, where he established a *Bhajan Sampradaya*. His followers sang, danced and presented through gesture this play during the Janmashtami celebrations. Thus Tirtha Narayana Yati was one of those who enriched the Bhagavata tradition in the Tanjavur district.

The *Krishnalilatarangini* is one of the numerous works written in the wake of the *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva and is acclaimed to be the only one among such works to have gained or maintained a comparable musical status. It is written in perfect literary Sanskrit, a fact to be specifically noted. This is because later on, though Sanskrit was handled for music compositions and even though Telugu was included, the style was dominated by Sanskrit. But by then the grammatical and literary equipment of composers became a secondary qualification.

*Krishnalilatarangini* is in twelve *taranga*-s; the songs are linked by verses and there are prose (*gadya*) passages. It is composed as a regular dance-drama and there are directions that such and such a context is being sung and accompanied by gesture in the next piece and so on. There are also rhythm syllables (*sollukattu*-s) of the Bharata Natyam technique. These *sollukattu*-s are utilized for the sole purpose of dancing. Tirtha Narayana Yati also wrote several poems, *padam*-s, *javali*-s and plays. *Parijata*, *Rukmangada Charitram*, *Rukmini Kalyanam* and *Kamsavadham* are among his better known plays.

The disciples of the saint continued this tradition of dance-dramas in order to propagate Bhakti. Among them the name of Gopalakrishna Shastri deserves special mention. The name of his son, Venkatarama Shastri, is, of course, a household word in the South. To Venkatarama Shastri goes the credit of writing the dance-dramas of the Bhagavata Mela Nataka tradition as it has come down to us in present times. Gopalakrishna Shastri composed *Sita Kalyanam*, *Dhruva Charitram*, *Gauri Charitram*, *Kuchela Charitram*, *Draupadi Vastraharanam* and *Rukmini Kalyanam*. These compositions were used mainly for Harikatha performances and not for dance-dramas. But Venkatarama Shastri's compositions are to this day used for enacting dance-dramas. The following twelve dance-dramas are ascribed to him: *Prahlada Charitram*, *Markandeya*, *Usha Parinayam*, *Rukmangada*, *Gollabhama*, *Sita Kalyanam*, *Rukmini Kalyanam*, *Dhruva Charitram*, *Kamsavadham*, *Harishchandra*, *Shivaratri Vaibhavam* and *Bhasmasuravadham*.

Venkatarama Shastri was a great Sanskrit scholar. Sanskrit verses figure as quotations in the dialogues of his works. However, since the language of the court was Telugu, he followed the prevailing custom and composed these dance-dramas in Telugu. He lived during the reign of the Maratha kings of Tanjavur, Raja Sarfoji (1800-1832) and Raja Shivaji (1832-1855); he was a younger contemporary of Adippayya and the elder contemporary of Mallavji and the famous saint-poet Tyagaraja.<sup>9</sup>

The art of Bhagavata Mela Nataka also spread to five other villages in the Tanjavur district: Soolamangalam, Saliyamangalam, Oothakadu, Nallur and Theperumanallur. Though Melattur has, from the earliest times, been the fountainhead of the Bhagavata Mela art, dance-dramas of a similar type were also enacted in connection with the local Vaishnavite temple festivals. Recent researches<sup>10</sup> point to the custom being in existence in many holy places, for example, in Kivalur, near Tiruvarur. Even before the time of Melattur Venkatarama Shastri, certain Telugu dramas believed to have come from Andhra Pradesh were enacted in Oothakadu. *Prahladan*, *Rukmangada*, *Vipranarayana* and *Sita Kalyanam* were performed in Saliyamangalam twice a year during the Ramanavmi *utsavam* and during the local temple festival. It is claimed that they are older than the compositions of Venkatarama Shastri. The enactment of *Gollakalapam* suggests a definite link with the Kuchipudi dance-dramas. At Theperumanallur different versions of *Prahlada Charitram* are enacted with Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil verses. At Kuttanur, the Bhagavatars used to stage *Rukmangada* in Tamil for seven nights.



Lilavati

The dance-dramas of Venkatarama Shastri have been more or less regularly enacted for the last 175 years at Melattur during the Narasimha festival. Several Bhagavatars of great distinction and merit have contributed towards sustaining this art. Among them the name of the late Natesh Iyer stands out prominently. He was a great exponent of this art and a nattuvanar endowed with deep knowledge. The noted pioneer, E. Krishna Iyer, studied Bharata Natyam under him. Two of Natesh Iyer's disciples, Kodanda Rama Iyer and Bharatam Nallur Narayanswami, also played a significant part in preserving the tradition.

The structure of the dance-drama follows the Sanskrit and the Shastric conventions. There are songs, dances, dialogues and speeches in the gradual unfolding of the play. The gestures and postures (*angika*), words (*vachika*), the representation of temperament (*sattvika*), costumes and decoration, make-up (*aharya*) — all these elements give *Natya* its characteristic form. The Bhagavata Mela Nataka tradition employs all these elements.

The technique of Bhagavata Mela Nataka incorporates all the three aspects of the histrionic art as expounded in the *Natyashastra* treatises. *Nritta* (pure dance), *Nritya* (expressional dance) and *Natya* (drama) find sufficient scope in the enactment of the dance-dramas. The pure dance flourishes with footwork and the movement of the limbs; *adavujathi*-s and *teermanam*-s are employed at several junctures in the play. The pure dance movements are austere. With exquisite lineaments, arabesques, triangles, parabolas, horizontal and vertical lines, they weave fascinating patterns and the movements are performed in three *kala*-s: *Vilambita*, *Madhya* and *Druta*.

*Abhinaya* follows the accepted conventions, using the *angika* aspect with hand gestures and facial expressions to intensify the emotional content of the song. In these aspects the technique of Bharata Natyam is closely followed.

The element of speech (*vachikabhinaya*) brings the form closer to the concept of *Natya*—drama proper. The conventions of *Lokadharmi* (the realistic and more natural) and the *Natyadharmi* (stylized) are employed in the presentation.

On the occasion of Narasimha Jayanti (which falls in the month of May or June) Melattur village (situated at a distance of twelve miles from Tanjavur) wears a festive look for about a week.

Melattur has three long streets with two rows of houses occupied by Brahmin families who claim descent from those to whom the village was originally donated. A *pandal* was built opposite the Varadaraja Perumal temple and dramas were staged on one side of the street on the same level as the audience. The light used was that of the big earthen lamps placed on trunks of plantain trees. There were no curtains, mikes and other modern appliances.

Today we see the temple deity being brought in a procession and placed in a mandapam about a hundred feet away, facing the stage. The convention now is to stage the dance-dramas in the divine presence. The dance-drama begins with the entrance of the *konangi* or a buffoon, who dances for a few minutes, his pranks provoking laughter. He is a direct link with the ancient drama tradition. He attracts the attention of the audience and utters 'Sadhu' 'Sadhu', requesting them to be silent. After his exit the musicians enter and sing *Todayamangalam*, beginning with the words *Jaya Janaki Ramana Jaya Vibhishana* in *raga* Nata. They sing *Prahlada Pattabhisheka Shabdham*, if the play to be enacted is *Prahlada Charitram*. They also recite several scintillating *sollukettu*-s. Then, as an offering of respect, the Bhagavatars are presented with sandal paste and flowers by an elder of the village. These formalities are observed at the beginning, during the enactment of the play, and are not repeated later on.

After these preliminaries a young boy with the mask of the elephant-head presents the *Patrapravesha daru* of Ganapati. He dances to the rhythm of the music provided by the musicians who sit in one corner. Sometimes this item is performed by a boy whose parents have taken a vow to present him on the stage. By his appearance in the role of Ganapati the vow is considered to be fulfilled. Then the dance-drama proper begins. The chief characters introduce themselves from behind a piece of cloth held by two stage hands. The characters sing along with the musicians and dance enacting *abhinaya* with appropriate *hastha*-s and facial expressions. The *hastha*-s employed follow the text of *Abhinayadarpana* and the scheme of facial expressions has for its basis the technique of *abhinaya* as laid down in the *Natyashastra*. These entrance songs (the *Patrapravesha daru*-s) generally offer a description of the character.

These *daru*-s afford a direct link with the *Natyashastra* tradition. The *Dhruvadhya*<sup>11</sup> of the *Natyashastra* refers to five kinds of *Dhruva*-s (*daru*-s) depending on their place and specific function. The first is the entrance *daru* (*Praveshika*), which introduces the character who appears on the stage. The actor-dancer also sings and introduces the character he is impersonating, either in the third person or in the first person depending on how the song has been composed. Abhinavagupta rightly observes that these songs are called *Dhruva*-s because they stabilize, or form the basis of the production and their themes are of fixed significance. The other *daru*-s employed in the Bhagavata Mela Nataka are the *Samvada daru* (also called *Uttarapratyutara daru*) where two characters converse, and *Svagata daru*, soliloquy songs. The characters express their sentiments in a certain context and most of these *Svagata daru*-s suggest a mood of sorrow or helplessness.

The dance-drama progresses from one scene to another. Besides songs there are regular *vachanam*-s (prose dialogues). Various other literary verse forms, like *Padya*-s, *Shabdham*-s, *Shloka*-s, *Churnika*-s, *Pada-varna*-s, *Shisam*-s, *Shishardham*-s, *Kandam*-s, *Kandardham*-s also appear in these dance dramas. Along with the poetic diction they blend with the dance and *abhinaya* at every stage. On the whole, the impression is one of a remarkable synchronisation of music, speech, dance and *abhinaya*, producing a highly aesthetic appeal which is aimed at *rasanubhava*.

Venkatarama Shastri had a thorough acquaintance with the technique of music and dance; his play, *Prahlada Charitram*, is considered one of the finest examples of this art form. This is so not only by virtue of the theme, but because of the excellence of the composition and it is the most frequently produced play in the Bhagavata Mela tradition.

The drama centres round the devotion of Prahlada<sup>12</sup> to Lord Vishnu whom the mighty and invincible Hiranyakashipu wishes to avenge for killing his brother Hiranyaksha. After practising severe penance, Hiranyakashipu has obtained a boon from Lord Brahma: he would not be killed by any being in Brahma's creation; he would not die indoors or outdoors, during the night or day. There was also a warning from the heavens that when he began to persecute his son, Prahlada, the God would slay him.

Prahlada worshipped Vishnu and all the attempts made by Hiranyakashipu failed to deflect him from the path of devotion. Finally, Hiranyakashipu told his son that if his God was present everywhere, why did he not appear and enter into combat with him? He struck a pillar from where emerged a strange creature half-lion and half-man (Narasimha). The king was amused to see him and challenged him, whereupon the Lord in that form killed the demon king and protected his devotee.

In the Bhagavata Mela Nataka tradition when the king strikes the pillar, the actor impersonating Narasimha (with a mask) appears from behind the stage. He goes into a trance and the stage hands put a scarf round his middle to prevent him from attacking Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu climbs down from the stage and walks among the spectators, who stand up to create a passage that leads to the temple. Hiranyakashipu carries on an exciting dialogue with Narasimha. The atmosphere is electrifying and the audience is thrilled. In the dialogue between the king and Narasimha, Venkatarama Shastri's text is replete with the doctrines of Bhakti and Vedanta. The audience hails the actor, playing the role of Hiranyakashipu, for his histrionic ability. Following the *Natyashastra* tradition, scenes of death and war are narrated. The killing of Hiranyakashipu, the ripping open of his stomach are not depicted. The king is vanquished symbolically.

Later on flowers and lamp *arati* are offered to the actor with the mask of Narasimha. Prahlada, Bhudevi, Lilavati, all climb down from the stage and along with Hiranyakashipu walk through the passage to the temple and cir-

A scene from *Prahlada Charitram*







Narasimha (with a mask) in a trance



Hiranyakashipu among the spectators

cumambulate the deity inside. The Bhagavatars sing a song in Bhupala raga (*Kamalanayana purnapurusha*), one most appropriate for the morning and the mood of early dawn. After offering *deeparadhana* rice to the deity, the actors walk through the streets of the village receiving honours at every house. Then they go to another temple in another street and offer prayers before the mask is removed. Sometimes the actor wearing the mask goes into a trance and remains motionless when the mask is removed. Water is then sprinkled on him and he recovers to resume his normal state. Once again the benedictory verses are recited. This is one of the most fascinating spectacles of our living theatre.

It is said that at the time of Natesh Iyer, ten dance-dramas by Venkatarama Shastri used to be staged in Melattur and the tradition was sustained till his death in 1930. In 1938, the present group of artistes led by G. Swaminathan took over the formal enactment of the plays. From 1938 to 1942 they presented two plays every year, *Prahlada Charitram* and *Markandeya*. From 1943 to 1951 they added two more plays: *Rukmangada* and *Usha Parinayam*. In 1952, *Harishchandra Nataka* (in two parts) was added. Since then four dance-dramas *Prahlada Charitram*, *Harishchandra* in two parts, *Usha Parinayam* and *Markandeya* are staged every year. In recent times *Rukmini Kalyanam* has been revived and plays like *Vipranarayana* added to the repertoire.

The most important Bhagavatar after the demise of Natesh Iyer is Balu Bhagavatar who lives in retirement at Melattur. He is more than eighty years old and can hardly guide the group. He is the last of the generation which knew the art in its varied aspects. In the remaining five villages the tradition is virtually dead. At Theperumanallur, feeble attempts are being made to revive the tradition with the help of the oldest living *natyacharya* T. V. Natesh Bhagavatar.

The late E. Krishna Iyer's contribution in reviving this tradition is most significant. In 1950, along with Rukmini Devi he visited Soolamangalam to organize the festival of these dance-dramas. Until his death in January 1968, he made strenuous efforts to put them on a sound footing. He also initiated the plans for building an open-air theatre on the plot of land donated by V. D. Swamy of Melattur. However the performing artistes prefer to present the dance-dramas in front of the temple.

At present there are two groups at Melattur. The first group is led by G. Swaminathan and his son S. Natarajan. It is known as Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Jayanti Bhagavata Mela Natya Nataka Sangam. The other group is led by Sethuraman and is known as Bhagavata Mela Natya Vidya Sangam. In order to avoid any conflict the festival is now celebrated twice a year within the interval of a month in May or June.

The artistes are all amateurs barring those of the old group. The female roles are played by male actors, in accordance with tradition. S. Natarajan plays the roles of Lilavati, Chandramati and Rukmini in *Prahlada Charitram*, *Harishchandra Nataka* and *Rukmini Kalyanam*. The artistes earn their living in different cities pursuing a variety of vocations, but invariably assemble a week in advance of the festival to rehearse the dance-dramas. It is in the nature of a votive offering but the standard is very poor. Sometimes nattuvanars like Shri Kittappa are invited to improve the *nritta* numbers like Alarippu, Jatiswaram and Tillana.

Mask of Narasimha



Balu Bhagavatar



G. Swaminathan is the only actor whose histrionic gifts are impressive. As Hiranyakashipu he is very convincing. His son S. Natarajan has been trained in the art of Bharata Natyam and is the moving spirit behind the troupe. He has kept the torch of this tradition alive through hard work and against several odds.

The costumes used for female roles are similar to those used by solo Bharata Natyam dancers. The male actors wear a long velvet coat and dhoti. They are decked with various ornaments to suit their roles, depending mostly upon the availability of funds. Masks are used for the *Rakshasa* characters. The mask of Narasimha is worshipped and is believed to possess magical powers.

The music of the Bhagavata Mela Natakas follows that of the classical Carnatic tradition. Venkatarama Shastri's knowledge of music was profound and he used the time-raga theory to intensify the *rasa*. The musician instruments used are the mridangam, flute, violin and cymbals. The nattuvanar recites the *jati*-s and the vocalists render the *daru*-s. The *jati*-s have been appended to certain *daru*-s by the author of the play himself. These *jati*-s generally extend over two or four *avarta*-s and end in sets of five (*khanda*), seven (*misra*) or nine (*sankirna*) *tala* syllables. The various *tala*-s employed are those used in the solo exposition of Bharata Natyam. *Chaturasra* Tripata (Adi), *Chaturasra* Rupaka, *Khanda*, *Jhampa*, *Misra* Chapu and *Tisra Eka* are commonly used in these dance-dramas. Comic interludes are introduced

Artistes performing in the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natak



as a concession to popular taste, even when not related to the main theme. The presentation is often crude and points to the gradual deterioration of standards. Nowadays the use of coloured lights, drop scenes and microphones rob these dance-dramas of their aesthetic appeal.

The copies of the manuscripts of the plays by Venkatarama Shastri were gifted away by Kalyani Amma, the daughter of Natesh Iyer, to Rukmini Devi of Kalakshetra in 1966. Rukmini Devi's efforts to preserve this tradition date back to 1950 when she visited Soolamangalam to see the Bhagavata Mela Natakas staged there. In 1958 Kalyani Amma came to Kalakshetra and with the assistance of Balu Bhagavata she helped Rukmini Devi to mount the production of *Usha Parinayam* using the original text. The text was edited by Telugu pandits and the dance-drama was produced on the lines of Kalakshetra productions. While reconstructing the dance-dramas Rukmini Devi followed the traditions prevailing at Melattur. Since then she has produced *Rukmini Kalyanam*, *Rukmangada Charitram* and *Dhruva Charitram*. In her work the tradition has found an extension at Kalakshetra. But at Melattur the tradition is fast dying out.

The Central Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Madras State Nataka Sangam have through grants to the groups sought to perpetuate the tradition. But such financial aid alone is not the remedy. There is no regular training centre and with the passing away of the old Bhagavata, the art will die at Melattur in the next two generations. The Melattur group sometimes travels to Madras and performs before city audiences; but the poor standards only succeed in defeating the purpose of preserving and keeping the tradition alive. Unless some urgent steps are taken to save this art, it might become a matter of the past in coming years.

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*Shri Ram Centre's Third National Drama Festival, Delhi.  
February 9 — 23*

The Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture held its Third National Drama Festival from February 9 to 23, 1979. Nine plays were staged, the scripts of these plays were in seven languages and six of these were staged twice on successive days. The whole programme was reasonably well-attended considering that Delhi theatre has yet to create an audience of the kind one finds in either Pune or Calcutta. Creating such an audience (and theatre) should be, and was, the aim of the Festival. Encouragement is thus given to theatre activities in language-regions where very little theatre exists; honour is accorded where honour is due—to those small and financially not so strong groups who, against terrific odds, are building a meaningful theatre in various corners of the country. The choice of groups like Shudrak (Calcutta) and Uday Kala Kendra (Bombay) made by Rajinder Nath (Director, Shri Ram Centre) was particularly appropriate in this context.

From *Amitakshar* (Bengali)



Of the nine plays, two were in Bengali, and two in Marathi. Hindi, Manipuri, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada were the other languages. It is particularly gratifying to note that the best plays in the festival were either performed by 'small' groups or, as in the case of the play probably liked best by the audience, the script happened to be in a language of which many of us know very little. It was Manipuri. The Chorus Repertory Theatre from Imphal with their production of *Uchek Langmeidong*, written and directed by Ratankumar Thiyam, won our hearts. Like a few other plays in the Festival, the folk form was used extensively in this production; but unlike in most cases, it was used here both beautifully and with signification. One recalls with pleasure the high quality of their acting. Following the general trend in the festival, the actresses (there were three in this production) were superb.

The best play in my opinion was *Amitakshar* by Shudrak from Calcutta, and many of those who saw it shared my reaction. Without doubt it had the best script of all, and as far as Bengali or Indian playwriting is concerned, this is a monumental addition. The quiet courage so vitally necessary to fight all terror and reaction was presented realistically and credibly by the author. Faith in man finds triumphant expression in the play. The tone was not false; there were no arid and hypocritical abstractions involving both 'faith' and 'man'. Debashish, the author, and Dwijen the director/hero avoided such pitfalls. Shudrak works with subtlety and delicacy, without sacrificing strength. The acting is generally good and Indrani and Gouri are fine actresses. One still retains the memory of Indrani's pain-dulled yet unvanquished eyes and twenty-one year old Gouri's virtuosity in retaining the stance and voice of a very old woman. In the department of male-acting, Dwijen towered above the rest. He played a man who was given false honour as a freedom-fighter in the past along with a pittance and who obtained in the end real honour as a freedom-fighter of today, but without the pittance or security in any form. Manoj Mitra in Sundaram's (Calcutta) *Sajano Bagan*, a play written and directed by himself, acted well. But since there was nothing remarkable in the production or the script, one remembers Dwijen as the exceptional actor of the festival.

All the actors and actresses in Awishkar's *Raktabeej* (Hindi) and Aniket's *Aapla Buwa Asa Aahe* (Marathi) were deft in varying degrees. Acting was a shade better in the Marathi play (both the groups were from Bombay), staged by the group comprising Amol and Chitra Palekar, and Dilip Kulkarni. *Raktabeej* had Sulabha and Arvind Deshpande, and Nitin Sethi. The two actresses were probably the best, particularly Chitra, whose variety unfolded itself as the play proceeded. Dr. Shankar Shesh's Hindi play was a curious mixture of the banal and the significant, while Manohar Katdare's Marathi one was frankly a light-hearted piece. Arvind Deshpande directed the Hindi play, while Damu Kenkre directed *Aapla Buwa Asa Aahe*.

Kannada-Bharathi (Delhi) produced *Nahi Nahi Rakshati* (Kannada) written by Na Kri Sa and directed by B. V. Karanth. And the N. S. D. Intensive Theatre Workshop (Madurai) had prepared a Tamil play *Pinam Thinnam Sasthirangal*, based on the Bharati poem *Panchali Sabadam*, and a Malayalam play *Kiratham* written by G. Shankara Pillai, directed by Banshi Kaul and Jameel Ahmed respectively. Karanth disappointed us, partly because he



From *Nahi Nahi Rakshati* (Kannada)

had a big cast but no actors; and, I am told, little time. The N.S.D. plays were like school-exercises, in which Jameel Ahmed stood first. Lots of groupings, lots of folk elements, a huge cast. But the end result — emptiness. One has to remember that both Bansi Kaul and Jameel were working with virtual non-actors. A small improvised bit meant as a curtain-raiser before *Kiratham* mercilessly exposed, among other things, the weakness of the actors who

were to participate in the main play of the evening. This was bad tactics, for the audience was heart-broken even before it started to watch *Kiratham*.

The second of the Marathi plays, *Key Wattel Te*, written by Jaya Dadkar and produced by Uday Kala Kendra, was the most theatrical and the least literary of all the plays shown in the festival. It was a musical, a satire, and words mattered little. The endless readjustment of stage stances, groupings and movements, which were eloquent at all times, often delightful, emerged triumphant in the last two scenes, when the whole play was elevated to a different region altogether. In the last scene, an assembly of actors' bodies formed a car to take the tipsy 'socialist' leader away to his palace; to his chariot-wheels of 'progress' was bound (by an invisible thread) the common 'man'. The actor (director Arun Hornekar) executed a macabre dance lying on the stage floor, his body dragged by a speeding car across roads and ditches. The piece was magnificent, and aptly climaxed a play which was essentially a director's and actor's play.

DILIP BASU

### *The 100th Record in the Unesco Collection*

During the Unesco General Conference, a musical evening was held on November 17, 1978 in the main conference hall at Unesco House, Paris, to celebrate the release of *The Pearl Fishers of Bahrain*, the 100th record in the Unesco Collection of traditional music.

The Unesco Collections of Records of traditional music, edited for the International Music Council by the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies (Berlin, Venice) under the direction of Alain Danielou and Paul Collaer, form part of a plan for the re-evaluation of the musical achievements of the various civilizations. Modern musical experiments which tend to uniformization and the mutual influence of one system on the other are not presented. The attempt is to present in its most authentic form the original contribution which each country, each region, each people, each civilization has made and still can make to the common cultural heritage.

For a better approach to the musical tradition in its various aspects, four collections have been planned and are being realized. These are called "Musical Sources", "Musical Atlas", "A Musical Anthology of the Orient" and "An Anthology of African Music".

In these various collections, the greatest importance is attached to the artistic value and technical level of the chosen examples.



### Union Bank's efforts to reach villagers through puppet shows

The Union Bank, one of our nationalized banks, recently embarked on a plan to educate villagers about its various schemes (intended to benefit the poorer strata of the people) through the medium of puppet shows.

The programme was conceived and implemented by the Bank through the help of Gokul Prakash Pratishthana of Pinguli in the Ratnagiri district. The artistes engaged in this art are Waders whose skill was practically on the decline through neglect and lack of patronage.

The Bank's timely gesture has given this art form a new lease of life. For instance, the show held at Kasbe Digraj on January 12, 1979 attracted 2,000 villagers. 70% of the 1071 branches of the Bank are located in rural and semi-urban areas and this mode of communication will help to acquaint the weaker sections of our rural society with the Bank's schemes for improving their lot.

### Gharana Sammelan, Rang Bhavan, Bombay, February 23-27, 1979.

Bombay's music world experienced a most unusual musical event in February this year—the Gharana Sammelan. It was organized by Sajan Milap, in cooperation with the Sangeet Research Academy of Calcutta and the ITC. Every evening one listened to *khayal*-s of a different *gharana*, against the backdrop of a large and powerful portrait of one of the old masters of the school. Rang Bhavan was practically full every day and, in the soft evening breeze under the clear February sky, a very receptive audience heard concentrated and consistently interesting pure vocal music.

Sajan Milap is a relatively new organization, started initially by disciples of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan. Its interest centres mainly round vocal music, specially in its traditional classical forms. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sajan Milap's first major conference concentrated on traditional *gharana*-s.

The need or function of the *gharana* system is often questioned today and there are many who consider it an obsolete concept. Without attempting to make any value judgements on this question, the organizers presented before the public five major schools: Kirana (Sawai Gandharva), Agra, Sahaswan, Gwalior and Jaipur (Alladiya Khan).

The format was novel. On each day there were three artistes of three generations: a youngster of promise, an ace performer and a doyen. Attention was paid to the *guru-shishya-parampara* aspect of the *gharana* system and this was reflected in the choice of artistes. Kirana presented Shrikant Deshpande, his guru, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, and that veteran disciple of Sawai Gandharva, Gangubai Hangal. From Agra, we heard the very young Jainal Abedin, his guru, Ustad Latafat Husain Khan, and then his guru, Ustad Khadim Husain Khan. Sahaswan presented the doyen, Ustad Nissar Husain Khan, his senior disciple, Ustad Hafeez Ahmed Khan and his youngest disciple, Rashid Khan. The powerful voice of Pandit Sharat Chandra Arolkar dominated the Gwalior *gayaki*; he was preceded by Laxman K. Pandit and his disciple Chitra Chakravarti. The Jaipur *gharana* was represented by Shruti Sadolikar and the two doyens of the school, Pandit Nivritibua Sarnaik and Mogubai Kurdikar. The organizers also brought out on the occasion a very informative and attractive brochure, with articles on the different *gharana*-s written by people closely associated with these schools.

The music was almost consistently excellent on all five days. It was as though Ustads Abdul Karim Khan, Nattan Khan, Inayat Khan, Rahmat Khan and Alladiya Khan had blessed all the artistes. Every single day, one was at once impressed by the stamp of the *gharana* on each artiste and the *parampara* as it was transmitted from the veteran to the youngsters. What also emerged at the end of the Sammelan was that the style of each *gharana* is indeed distinctly different and that most artistes, while they continue the tradition, also add individual touches of their own. That is what makes for the continuous enrichment of Hindusthani classical music.



While all the artistes performed well, special mention must be made of a few. Young Jainal and Rashid stole the hearts of the audience with their confident yet innocent rendering of *raga Yaman*. Jainal shows great promise and Rashid is already almost a finished artiste. What is remarkable is that, at a tender age, they have grasped the *gharana* features and the special *gayaki* of their gurus. Jainal's *nom-tom alap* and Rashid's *taan-s* will be remembered by the listeners for a long time to come.

Ustad Hafeez Ahmed Khan's crisp rendering of *Chhayanat*, in his deep and resonant voice, was outstanding. His *khayal*, *bandeeshi thumri* and *tappa* had very definite *Sahaswan* features, along with an elegance, and his very individual sense of the aesthetic. The other noteworthy performer was Pandit Nivrattibua Sarnaik, who has done considerable research on the *delineation of raga-s*. His presentation of *Shudha-Kalyan* was novel, with a greater stress on the *tivra madhyam* and *nishada*; his *Sughray*, exquisite with a touch of *Bageshri*. *Taan-s* are his forte and they came in one fascinating pattern after another.

One very clear conclusion drawn from the *Sammelan* was that doyens remain doyens all the way through. Each of them was outstanding. Whether it was Gangubai Hangal's *Abhogi* or Pandit Arolkar's *Malkauns*, one marvelled at the talent, training and dedication which made it possible for them to perform even today with such grandeur.

Ustad Khadim Husain Khan's was a most enjoyable lecture-demonstration. His *alap* and *hori-dhamar* in *Darbari* was not only impressive but definitely dispelled the popular myth that the *Agra gharana* was only concerned with *layakari*. Ustad Nissar Husain Khan's *Jaijaiwanti*, rendered in the deep of night, created a soulful atmosphere. His voice has a rare elasticity; his *taan-s* and *sargam-s*, an elusive quality—one feels the effect but cannot quite lay one's finger on its origins. His moving *thumri* in *Kirwani* was a masterpiece.

To many of us Mogubai Kurdikar is a legend, not a reality. To watch her serene personality was in itself a special experience, but to hear her silken, soft voice was elevating. There is a delicate and ethereal quality about her music which creates almost a devotional atmosphere. Her exquisite recital was definitely the most fitting way of concluding the conference.

The Sangeet Research Academy, Calcutta, with the help of ITC, has done much to continue the *guru-shishya* tradition and thereby preserve the purity of the *gharana-s*. On the first day of the Conference, the Academy honoured Pandit Haribhau Ghangrekar, the oldest surviving disciple of the great Pandit Ramkrishnabua Vaze, and Manohar K. Mulay, to whom so many musicians owe the beautiful *jawari* of their instruments.

The *Sammelan* was a successful experiment and for many a very rewarding experience. Judging by the popular interest and the array of young talents presented, the future of the *gharana* system seems well-assured indeed.

ALAKANANDA PATEL

*Music and Psychology: A Lecture-Series at the Department of Music, University of Bombay, March 26, 27, 29.*

Musicians and music-lovers in India have always taken a curiously mystifying stand regarding any kind of 'study' of music. Though we possess a highly stylized, a rigorously formalized tradition of classical music, our musicians have always regarded every 'science' of music with scepticism. Their attitude is based on the aesthetic assumption that 'art' and 'science' exclude each other. They say that 'art' is spontaneous, direct, concrete, emotive, and gives us an experience of the particular; 'science', on the other hand, is studied, abstract, intellectual, logical, and aims at generalizations. Thus it is assumed that a 'scientific study' of an art is not only useless, but also detrimental to the activity of aesthetic creation.

There are several factors responsible for this clearly out-dated stance. But what concerns us here is the ironical fact that classical musicians in India, though they themselves prefer to deride other, non-classical forms of music as 'unscientific', start to become possessive when it comes to a scientific analysis of their own province. Then they proclaim that classical music is 'divine', 'intuitive', 'instinctive', and, therefore, inaccessible to scientific exploration.

It is against this background that we must review Dr. Manas Raychaudhari's lecture-series on certain problems related to music and psychology. The lectures were delivered at the Department of Music, University of Bombay as part of the Prof. B. R. Deodhar Endowment Programme.

A psychologist and musician in his own right, Dr. Raychaudhari discussed and illuminated many problems related to the 'medium' of music, namely sound, and to the 'creator' of music, namely the musician.

In his first lecture, he introduced a relatively new field of interdisciplinary study, psycho-acoustics. Acoustics is a branch of physics which studies the properties of sound. It studies phenomena such as the production, transmission, reflection and perception of sound, and relates the physical properties of sound like frequency, amplitude, etc., to these phenomena. In psycho-acoustics, these phenomena are analysed from the point of view, and with the methods, of psychology. The 'physical' or 'vibrational' aspects of sound are viewed as related to its 'tonal' or 'psychological' aspects, and this relationship is analysed. Dr. Raychaudhari cited a simple experiment in which the subject was asked to imitate vocally a sound coming from a tuning fork; it was found that the vocal pitch was lowered when the fork was brought nearer the ear of the subject. This proves that louder tones are *heard* as lower tones.

Such considerations, regarding the whole network of relationships between the physical properties of sound and their perceptual implications, are obviously important for anyone connected with musical activity. For example, the makers of musical instruments may find some of these findings

extremely valuable. These considerations also play a significant role in the placement of instruments in a *mehfil*, and are, therefore, also important from the point of view of a performer.

In addition, Dr. Raychaudhari discussed certain 'applied' areas of psycho-acoustics: its application in education, industry and therapy. In the field of musical education, for example, psycho-acoustic research may play a crucial role in deciding the value of 'overlearning', or of 'whole' vs 'part' learning, or of 'tonal memory', etc. Applied psycho-acoustics has also made a contribution in the field of physio-therapy as well as psycho-therapy (for example, in the treatment of schizophrenia).

In his second lecture, Dr. Raychaudhari was concerned with the problem of defining, identifying, and measuring 'musical talent'. Citing many examples of musical precocity—such as that displayed by child prodigies like Mozart, Beethoven and Handel in Western music, and Manohar Barve and Kumar Gandharva in Indian music—Dr. Raychaudhari pointed out that many accomplished musicians have displayed remarkable musical talent in their childhood. The converse of this principle, however, is not true, for only ten percent of child prodigies seem to develop into accomplished musicians when they grow up. There are many reasons for this: absence of any special attention from parents, lack of opportunities or of financial support, etc. In India, however, the factor responsible for hampering the development of a prodigy into a mature artist is the parents' overwhelmingly possessive attitude. Instead of providing the child with a good musical education, they are anxious that he should *display* his gifts publicly.

Discussing the pioneering work of psychologists like Seashore, Revesz, Richet, and Slowimsky, Dr. Raychaudhari posited certain basic components of musical talent, such as pitch-discrimination, pitch-memory, sense of rhythm, ability to discriminate between original and imitated works, etc. He also cited certain attempts to measure these abilities quantitatively. The importance of these tests and sub-tests in the field of musical education could hardly be overstated. Institutions of musical education may fruitfully employ these in their aptitude and audition tests.

In his final lecture, Dr. Raychaudhari attempted to present a fairly comprehensive "profile in (musical) creativity", based on the bio-data gathered by him from fifty top-ranking classical musicians in India. The findings were classified under numerous heads: (i) family background, which includes the profession of the parents, their economic status, the structure and size of the family, inter-family relationships and interactions; (ii) the parent-child relationship and the child's emotional identification with the parents; (iii) the leisure-time activities of the creative subjects; (iv) their values and attitude system; (v) their work-habits, etc.

Though Dr. Raychaudhari did not claim to have deduced any generalization about the exclusive or crucial determinants of musical creativity, some of his general observations are significant enough: a typical Indian musician is found to be the child of parents who had little or no pro-

fessional musicality; his childhood is marked by isolation and alienation which point to his individuality and ego-centered attitudes; he is usually close to his mother, finding emotional and attitudinal identification with the mother rather than the father; the most important person in his life is usually his Guru, who becomes his model in many ways; he has no extra-musical interests or pursuits in his leisure time, or rather he has very little leisure time.

It was obviously not possible for Dr. Raychaudhari to touch upon every major problem in the field he had chosen to discuss. But he succeeded in stimulating the audience, for every lecture was followed by a brief discussion session in which many more problems regarding the nature of musical sound, the personality of the musician, and musical creativity were raised. One felt, however, that the audience would have profited far more had they been presented with a clear-cut outline of the material put forward by Dr. Raychaudhari. Secondly, it was rather surprising to find Dr. Raychaudhari concentrating only on the 'creator' and the 'medium' of music, and almost totally ignoring the 'receiver' of music. Certain important problems concerning the 'medium' of music—particularly the perception of the *gandhara* in the sound of a well-tuned *tanpura*—also went untouched.

MILIND S. MALSHE

### *Bharatiya Nritya Samaroh, Ahmedabad, March 22-25, 1979.*

The Nartan School of Classical Dance organised a four-day festival of major dance styles at Ahmedabad on March 22-25, 1979 on the occasion of the inauguration of their new premises. Smita Shastri, a disciple of Mrinalini Sarabhai, Chatunni Panicker and C. R. Acharyalu, undertook this ambitious project and revealed a capacity for thorough and efficient organization

A special feature of this festival was the series of dance-demonstrations by the gurus of different styles held in the premises of the school. The gurus, Kelucharan Mahapatra (Odissi), C. R. Acharyalu (Kuchipudi), Bipin Singh (Manipuri), Birju Maharaj (Kathak), Kalyanasundaram (Bharata Natyam) and Krishnan Kutty (Kathakali), demonstrated the salient features of the dance forms. Their exposition was in keeping with the tradition they had mastered from their own gurus. And yet one could instinctively feel that each of them had added something of his own and thus enriched the tradition. One also realized that there are no short-cuts to achieving mastery over the medium.

In the evenings, dance recitals were held at the Jayashankar Sundari Hall, where leading dancers including Sanjukta Panigrahi (Odissi), Smita

Shastri (Kuchipudi), Kumudini Lakhia and Troupe (Kathak), Jhaveri Sisters (Manipuri), Vani and Meera Ganapathi (Bharata Natyam) and Guru Krishnan (Kathakali) performed, and the gurus felicitated, offered shawls and souvenirs. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also honoured the gurus and dancers. This was the first time that a festival of such magnitude and diverse dance styles was held in Ahmedabad.

*Davierwalla Retrospective, Jehangir Art Gallery, February, 1979.*

Had Adi been present at the Retrospective Exhibition of his work, sponsored and organized by Art Heritage (Delhi), at the Jehangir Art Gallery in February of this year, he would have felt exactly the way I did. I wouldn't at all have been surprised if he had turned to me and said, "You know, Fatang, this is terrific! I never realized I had done so much work and now seeing it all put together, it does look good, doesn't it?" "Not good, Adi. Fantastic!", I would have said because that is really what I felt about the Retrospective. It was probably the finest exhibition of Indian sculpture of the post-Independence period.

It is surprising that a Retrospective of a sculptor of Davierwalla's calibre was not sponsored by the Lalit Kala Akademi, which, in fact, should have undertaken this responsibility. The entire credit of co-ordination so that every piece held good even though done in different periods of Adi's life, of compilation, of thoughtful positioning so that the whole exhibition came alive goes to Ebrahim Alkazi and to Sunil Sen, who helped in the display. The success of the Retrospective was wholly due to Alkazi's perseverance, his artistic discernment.

Nearly a hundred works were on view in wood, stone, bronze, steel, scrap, aluminium. The motifs latent in the sculptor's mind might have been figurative or religious, but the eventual form that emerged had the austerity and strength of the abstract. Working in metal or scrap, he could impart to it a tonal quality, like that of a painting.

Very few people really knew Adi Davierwalla. His appearance was mild, but he had guts of steel, which he was able to use when he procreated his thoughts into monumental forms of welded iron, scrapwood or carved stone, eventually working it out into new forms of creation. Even the models for large works seemed to be crying out for a massive scale to match the intensity of the sculptor's feeling.





Pen drawing of Devierwelle by V. Gaitonde

Walking round the exhibits with Tyeb Mehta, we stopped before the last piece, "Torso in Steel", done just before his death. Tyeb said, "Had he lived longer and created more sculptures of this quality, what a contribution it would have been!" I straightaway replied, "Isn't this it?"

In the presence of a sculpture as magnificent as this, a viewer, even a lay one, would stand in wonder as though he was on the verge of some kind of discovery. And this, above all, is what Adi himself would have wished.

BAL CHHABDA

## Obituaries

### *Raja Paranjape*

Raja Paranjape, a key figure in the Marathi cinema, died at Pune on February 9. He was sixty-nine. He directed and himself acted in several films: *Pedgaonche Shahane*, *Pudhche Pawool*, *Lakhachi Goshta*, *Pathlag* and *Jagachya Pathiwar*, to name a few. His comic spirit and social concern endeared him to the Marathi filmgoers, and he was also the recipient of several State awards.

### *Ramu Kariat*

Ramu Kariat, veteran Malayalam film director, died at Trichur on February 10, 1979. He was fifty-one. To filmgoers outside Kerala he is best known for his film *Chemmeen*, based on Thakazhi's famous novel. The film won the President's Gold Medal in 1966.

### *S. Sukhdev*

S. Sukhdev, one of our foremost documentary makers, died in Delhi on March 1, 1979. He was forty-six. Among his films, *And Miles to Go* and *After the Eclipse* won him awards at the Indian International Festival. *India '67* captured the mood of the time while *Kumbhamela* communicated the spirit of the festival. His most memorable film was *Nine Months to Freedom*, dealing with the Bangla Desh conflict.

### *P. J. Antony*

Kerala's well-known character actor P. J. Antony died in Madras on March 14, 1979. He was fifty-six. A playwright, lyricist and composer in his own right, he became known outside Kerala for his brilliant and moving portrayal of the *Velichapad* (Oracle) in M. T. Vasudevan Nair's prize-winning film *Nirmalyam*. The role won P. J. Antony the prestigious Bharat Award.

### *Dr. V. Raghavan*

On April 5 died Dr. V. Raghavan, one of our great scholars and an upholder of our great traditional heritage. He was seventy-one.

Dr. Raghavan had a brilliant academic career—college prizes, university medals, Fellowships. That is not so unusual. But he had the good fortune of combining a modern academic schooling with the traditional forms of the study of Sanskrit. This means a study of Sanskrit in the perspective of *Alankara*, *Vyakarana*, schools of philosophy, and aesthetics. Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswamy Sastri was his mentor.

When, years later, Dr. Raghavan succeeded Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswamy Sastri as the head of the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Madras, it meant carrying forward a tradition of scholarship estab-

lished by his guru. His work at the University and outside as a scholar, a researcher, a thinker, a philosopher, lecturer and author would take several pages to catalogue. And it is all well-known today. Many honours came his way: Honorary degrees, titles, prestigious lectureships, Awards. But Dr. Raghavan was more than all that. He was a poet, a kind of intellectual aristocrat, a little aloof, inflexible where standards were concerned. He was a brahmin in the best sense of the word.

To lovers of the performing arts, it is Dr. Raghavan's preoccupation with Dance and Music that is of the highest value. Few contemporary scholars knew the *Natya Shastras* better; and few have studied and understood the meaning and the significance of our ancient treatises on music as he did. The standing, the prestige and the authority of the Music Academy in Madras owes much to his wisdom and sane guidance.

The Quarterly Journal will miss one of its regular and most authoritative contributors. Dr. Raghavan was guest editor of our special number on Muttuswami Dikshitar, author of the first publication of the Centre, *Muttuswami Dikshitar*, and our March number, published a few days before his death, contained a scholarly contribution by him on *Music in Sanskrit Literature*.

## Book Reviews

THE ORIGIN OF RAGA by S. Bandyopadhyaya, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., N. Delhi, 1977 (Second Edition) Rs. 30.00 (*In English*).

The work under review is a revised and slightly enlarged version of the book published in 1946. The changes which have been incorporated have not altered the basic character of the original which may have been passable at that time, but is not really acceptable today, in view of the scholarly works which have been published in recent times. The most aggravating of the revisions is the insertion of occasional diacriticals and altered spellings, seemingly completely at random and following neither system nor consistency. Thus, the Sanskrit authors, Dattila and Śārṅgadeva, are rendered as Duṭīla and Saranga Deva (p. 17) or 'sāranga dēva' (p. 24), while the Vedic accents, *udātta*, *anudātta* and *svarita*, as *Udāṭya*, *Anudāṭya* and *Svārita* (p. 4). Even the diacritical mark above the letter 'a', indicating the long vowel, is not consistently applied: *gāndhāra*, for instance, being transliterated as *gāndhars*. Surely, it is better to avoid transliteration marks completely than to use them incorrectly. Fortunately, however, these sporadic attempts at transliteration are mainly limited to the first chapter.

Among the additions are occasional paragraphs inserted into the original text, a one-and-a-half page Index and a Bibliography consisting of only twelve Sanskrit treatises. Several of these are described as being "not available at present" or "very rare". These include works such as, *Sangita Perijata* and *Sangita Darpana*, parts of which have been published in the 1950's and are commonly available.

Professor Bandyopadhyaya's entire book of 82 pages consists of three chapters. The first, "Conception of Music", begins with the Vedic period and extends to about the 14th or 15th century A.D., briefly touching on treatises, such as, *Natyashastra*, *Dattilam*, *Bṛhaddeshi*, *Sangita Makaranda* and *Sangita Ratnakara*. The early part of this chapter is sketchy and some statements are certainly controversial. The author states, for instance, that the musical system of the *Natyashastra*

"was based on twenty two 'shrutee' (microtonal (sic) intervals of sound), seven sharp 'suḍha' and two flat 'vikrita'— (Antara Gāndhara and Kakali Nishada) notes 'svara', two scales 'grāma' namely, the Sadja and Maḍhyama, and lastly twenty one 'moorchana'." (pp. 6 and 7).

Most scholars now believe that the *shuddha* notes of the *Natyashastra* were similar to our present-day Kafi *thata*, with *komala gandhara* and *nishada*, while *antara* and *kakali* represented raised (sharp) versions of these notes, not flat as Bandyopadhyaya states. Further, Bharata recognized, not twenty-one but, fourteen *murchana*-s, seven from each of the two *grama*-s. No specific reference is given for the author's statement above,

but many Sanskrit quotations are included in this book, some unfortunately without translation or discussion, prefaced by comments, such as,

"The following verses shall give an idea of the jatis properly." (p. 7).

Lists of *raga-s* are, however, given both in their Devanagari original and in English, the latter without diacriticals and containing some inconsistencies, e.g., Varati and Malhar being transcribed as Barathi and Maller.

Chapter Two, "The Origin of Raga", deals with the *raga* systems of some of the treatises from about the Mughal period upto the modern. These include *Sangita Darpana*, *Raga Tarangini*, *Hridaya Kautuka* and *Prakasha*, *Sangita Parijata* and *Raga Vibodha*. In this chapter, too, there are many lists of *raga-s* given in Devanagari and English, while other quotations, for instances, the *dhyana* verses on p. 28, are left untranslated. A more serious situation arises where, owing to the author's failure to interpret some of these quotations, the student reader may well be misled. An example of this can be seen on p. 38, in connection with Hridaya Narayana's *raga* Bhairavi, which is said to contain *shuddha svra-s*. The reader, who is not familiar with the nomenclature employed in this period, might easily be led to one of two conclusions: that this Bhairavi was in our modern North Indian *shuddha* scale, Bilavala *thata* or that Hridaya Narayana's *shuddha mela* was like the modern Bhairavi *thata*. In fact, neither of these would be correct as the *shuddha mela* of this period was evidently similar to our Kafi *thata*. Thus the reader would be well advised to consult other writings, such as, Pandit Bhatkhande's *A Comparative Study of Some of the Leading Music Systems of the 15th, 16th and 18th Centuries* for clarification on some of these issues.

The final chapter, *The Treatment of Rāga*, is concerned with modern theory and is based primarily on Bhatkhande's system. Here the author discusses *thata* and its relation to *raga*, *raga jati-s*, *varna-s*, *vadi-samvadi*, the ten *lakshana-s* of *raga-s* (which are discussed further in the appendix following) and the time theory of *raga-s*. The chapter concludes with descriptions of the ten principal *raga-s* (Bhatkhande's *ashraya raga-s*) from which the *thata* names are derived. This chapter also contains some inaccurate and misleading information. On p. 54, for instance, the author compares *mela* and *raga*, as follows:

- "1. A 'Mela' must have all the seven notes of the octave in order of succession, which is not allowed in a Rāga.
2. Both the forms of a note, such as, sharp and flat may be used one after the other in a 'Thata', that is not permitted in a Rāga."

The first of these prescriptions is contradicted in the author's descriptions of the ten *raga-s* which follow, where the ascending and descending lines of seven of these *raga-s* are given in regular order of succession. The second prescription is quite incorrect since there are no modern *thata-s* in which both forms of a single note are employed.

There are now a large number of books on Indian music and each one has something to offer the reader, not least of all, an insight into the thought processes of the author. This reviewer would not have been quite so critical of this book if the author, in his Exordium, had not offered it as:

"a reliable text book on the history of the evolution, growth and treatment of the particular subject, namely, the Rāga."

Had the book been submitted to a scholarly reader before publication, perhaps it might have come closer to achieving the author's expectations. As it stands, the main value of this book lies in that it offers a convenient collection of Sanskrit references from a variety of sources on *jati*, *raga* and some technical terms.

NAZIR ALI JAIRAZBHOY

TRADITIONS OF INDIAN THEATRE by M. L. Varadpande, Abhinav Publications, N. Delhi, 1979, Rs. 75.00 (*In English*).

This is an attractively wrapped and packaged book and, like many such packages, the contents, unfortunately, are disappointing.

The jacket describes the book as a scholarly exploration, scanning a mass of literary, epigraphical and archaeological material. This is a claim which can hardly be taken seriously, since the book lacks the most basic scholarly requirements: it does not contain a single footnote, proper citation or substantiation. This may perhaps denote contempt for normal scholarly procedure which involves a sharing of resources on which knowledge is based. Perhaps it arises out of lethargy on the part of the author or the publisher. Both are equally reprehensible.

The book consists of nine short pieces (numbering eight to ten pages each), preceded by an introduction styled as Prologue. The Prologue states that "six chapters in the book" were published as articles in the *Journal of the Sangeet Natak Akademi* and one in the *Journal of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations*, without specifying which. The Prologue contains such exciting pieces of information as "Greco-Roman traders settled in colonies at many coastal and inland trade centres in South India. In 1899 a Greek farce with Kannada passages was found in Oxyrhynchus in Egypt . . . The farce belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era. It is obvious that it must have been performed in India before Kannada-Greek-knowing audiences" (p. 12). "Ithyphallic Nataraja images are found in Orissa which seem to have some connection with ithyphallic Shiva on the Indus seal" (p. 10). There is no indication at all about how and where the author found this information.



Of the nine pieces, four—*Theatrical Arts in Jataka Tales, Performing Arts and Arthashastra, Stree Preksha: A Tradition of Female Theatre and Prekshanaka and Temple Theatre*—try to reconstruct the vanished eras of ancient Indian theatre. The author's procedure consists in introducing a word or a concept, making connections (which are never substantiated) from a variety of literary and non-literary sources and erecting a theory, an almost sweeping generalization by the end of the eighth page. To illustrate, the word *Stree Preksha*, mentioned in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, is declared to be "quite significant in the overall context of the theatrical tradition of India" (p. 35). Before he knows what is happening, the reader is confronted in quick succession with Bhasa's *Charudatta* and *Pratima*, the *Kamasutra*, "the willowy Mohenjo-daro danseuse", the *Natyashastra* of Kautilya, is the *Natakalekshana Ratna Kosha*, the *Abhinaya Darpana*, the Prasenjit pillar of the Bharhut Stupa, the Rani Gumpa cave near Bhubaneswar in Orissa, Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasiya*, the *Harivamsha Purana*, the *Ubhayabhisarika* by Vararuchi, Banabhatta's *Kadambari*, Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamcharitam*, Shri Harsha's *Priyadarshika*, Damodargupta's *Kuttinimatam*, the Jogimara Cave, *Gita Govinda Nat*, a Tamil inscription found in the Tirunelveli district of Tamilnadu, an inscription in Sanskrit and Telugu found at Malkapuram, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, the 38th verse of the Bayana inscription of Chitrallekha and the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali, as evidence. None of these is shown as employing the term *Stree Preksha* with which the author started his speculation. All they contain are oblique references to various performances in which women participated. But on the basis of such 'evidence' the author concludes confidently, "All this evidence goes to prove the existence of *Stree Preksha* in India . . . The history of Indian theatre would remain incomplete without the mention of the tradition of *Stree Preksha* (Pl. XVIII) which has been ignored by critics hitherto" (p. 41). Two other articles *Early Indian Theatre* and *Nagarjunakonda Amphitheatre* also take the reader on a trip to the wilder shores of 'research'. By comparison, the remaining three pieces, *Ganesha*, *Vidushaka* and *The Sutradhara*, which deal with non-antiquarian subjects, fare better.

The book is probably meant for the cultural tourism trade for which many publishing firms in and around New Delhi are now well-gearred. As far as production values go the publishers do an excellent job but as in the export of other commodities such as garments, carpets and handicrafts, quality control should be evident even in the choice of the basic material.

PRAMOD KALE

## Record Reviews

Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur. Side One: *Raga Khat*. Side Two: *Raga Nat-Bihag*. INRECO 2411-5040 (stereo).

Manik Varma. Side One: *Raga Shyam-Kalyan*. Side Two: *Raga Bihagda; Raga Des*. INRECO 2411-5038 (stereo).

Lalgudi G. Jayaraman: Classical Music of India. The Dance of Sound—Thillanas. Orchestra conducted by Shyam. EMI ECSD 3288 (stereo).

Songs From a People's Soul. Music Direction: Balkrishna Das. EMI Popular S/EMGE 12251 (stereo).

Lyrics of Gopalkrushna. Music Direction: Balkrishna Das. EMI Popular S/EMGE 12253 (stereo).

Zubin Mehta conducts Suites from John Williams' "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Star Wars"—Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI Decca SXL 6885

KRAFTWERK—The Man Machine. EMP Capitol SW 11728 (stereo).

Golden Time of Day: Maze. Featuring Frankie Beverly. EMI Capitol ST-11710 (stereo).

From among the discs that we have received for review, two attract our attention. They are an L.P. by Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur and another by Manik Varma, both with the label INRECO—the Indian Record Manufacturing Company Limited of Calcutta.

The Mallikarjun Mansur disc is labelled: "Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur sings rare and complex *raga-s*". There are two *raga-s* featured here. One is the *raga Khat*, not a 'popular' *raga*. It is a mixture of some six *raga-s*, hence called *shat*, later changed to *khat*. Whether a mixture or compound of six *raga-s* should necessarily make a 'great' or 'memorable' *raga* is questionable. But Mallikarjun Mansur is Mallikarjun Mansur and whatever he sings has a quality which compels one's attention. The second *raga*, *Nat-Bihag*, is neither 'rare' nor particularly complex and here Panditji is relaxed, totally at home and gives us an authentic and totally satisfying delineation of the *raga*, the *khayal* being that perennial favourite, *Jhan jhan jhan payal baje*.

Manik Varma's disc has three *raga-s* on it: *Shyam-Kalyan* on one side; *Bihagda* and *Des* on the other. The *Shyam-Kalyan vilambit khayal* is

the well-known *Jiyo mere lai*. The technical quality of the disc is poor. Here and there, there are slight variations in speed. The balance too could have been better. The ubiquitous harmonium intrudes, making a mockery of the fine subtle intonation of the artiste. In Maharashtra, more than anywhere else in India, the harmonium, a limited, tempered instrument, particularly unsuitable for serious Indian music, is now on the ascendancy. This is sad because Maharashtra is an area where the subtle shades and nuances of our music are truly valued and appreciated, and the slow replacement of the sarangi by the harmonium may affect the intonation of students and young exponents of vocal music.

Orissa contributes two albums this quarter. One is a set of popular *bhajan*-s addressed to the tutelary deity of Orissa, Jagannatha; the other is a collection of lyrics by Gopalkrushna Pattanayak. The music direction is by Balkrishna Das who himself sings some of the pieces. Some of the most popular singers from Orissa like Raghunath Panigrahi feature on these discs which should prove popular not only in Orissa, but also outside.

Lalgudi Jayaraman, that fine violinist from the south, features on an HMV label with a number of *Thillana*-s to the accompaniment of an 'Orchestra'! This does not do justice to Lalgudi or Carnatic music.

Capitol E.M.I. releases include two off-the-beat albums of music in a lighter vein—"Kraftwerk: the Man Machine", recorded in West Germany, and "Golden Time of Day—Maze", featuring Frankie Beverly.

Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra show their versatility in a brilliant performance of suites from John Williams' "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Star Wars". The enormous popularity of "Star Wars" (the 20th Century Fox film is in its twenty-fifth week in Bombay at the time of writing), and of "Close Encounters" (Columbia Pictures) which has just opened in Bombay, and the magic of Zubin Mehta's baton should make it a best-seller the world over.

## MUTTUSWAMI DIKSHITAR

by

Dr. V. Raghavan

Dr. Raghavan has made extensive studies of Muttuswami Dikshitar, the man and his music, and is one of our greatest authorities on all aspects of the composer's creation. The book contains an article of some 10,000 words on Muttuswami Dikshitar by Dr. Raghavan and contributions by him on members of the Dikshitar *shishya parampara*. The text of the famous *Navagraha kriti*-s is included and presented with *swaralipi* (notation). A Dikshitar bibliography, a selective discography and a comprehensive index to the musical compositions of the entire Dikshitar tradition are other important features of the volume. Dr. Raghavan's painstaking labours have contributed towards making this book a reference manual of the highest value and an indispensable tool for students of music.

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